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“Preachers of To-day”

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EDITED BY J. STUART HOLDEN, M.A.

THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT

J. M. E. ROSS, M.A.

“PREACHERS OF TO-DAY”

EDITED BY

REV. J. STUART HOLDEN, M.A.,

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THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT

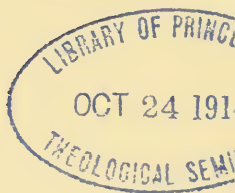
BY THE REV.

J. M. E. ROSS, M.A.

GOLDER'S GREEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AUTHOR OF

"THE SELF-PORTRAITURE OF JESUS"



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MCMXI

TO THE OFFICE-BEARERS AND PEOPLE
OF
ST. PAUL'S, REDHILL

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF TEN YEARS
TOGETHER IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST
AND HIS CHURCH

September, 1911.

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THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT

I

THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT

"Gods many and lords many. [But to us . . .]"—I COR.
viii. 5, 6.

THERE is a great deal of meaning in these three words, "But to us." They contain at least the mystery of standpoint—the mighty and far-reaching difference made by a point of view. As men wander about the world, they find how every different post of observation gives a different universe. On one year's holiday we see the Alps from the north; the next year we see some of the same summits from the south; and we have difficulty in recognizing from the new standpoint the peaks that had been familiar friends. The very heavens change their aspect if we change the meridian from which we view

them; let a man move far enough and he will see the North Star sink low upon the horizon and the Southern Cross rise upon his gaze; given two standpoints sufficiently apart, and it is day at the one and night at the other. It is not different with the landscapes of the mind and the firmaments which are mapped only by the astronomy of the soul. "We could come to no compromise," Robert Louis Stevenson wrote of those whose "facts" were no facts to him, "as to what was or what was not important in the life of man. Turn as we pleased, we all stood back to back in a big ring and saw another quarter of the heavens, with different mountain-tops along the sky-line and different constellations overhead."¹ My text is an illustration: "Gods many and lords many. But to us. . ."—Here are different standpoints, different worlds.

Now because there is in this phrase the fact of standpoint, there is also behind it something more—the line of development which resulted in the standpoint. Here the line is twofold—a certain tradition that produced enlightenment, a certain experience that produced conviction. Difference of standpoint, like other things, requires a cause adequate to account for it. If you see the Southern Cross while I see the Polar Star, that

¹ *Virginibus Puerisque.*

is because I live north of the Equator and you south of it. If it is day with you while it is night with me, it is because nationality or travel has put between us the distance that is between east and west. Here is a pebble in the path as we walk through the forest. To the ants that swarm near it that pebble is a mountain; they are climbing over it, running round it, investigating it with as much eagerness as if it were one of the big things of the world. *But to us*, who are men, it is only a pebble to be ground into the mud or to be kicked aside into the ditch. Between the two standpoints there lies the mighty fact of species—who knows what mystery of creation or evolution? Here are a group of African tribesmen trying to understand the motives and actions of an Englishman. Captain Speke said that when he was among the Somali, and walked up and down to take exercise, they suspected him of some secret and mysterious designs, as they could not understand any man exerting himself so strenuously without grave necessity. Those children of the sun found the energetic explorer a problem; *but to us* who are children of the temperate zone and heirs of the strenuous life, his motives are plain and his purpose congenial. Between the two standpoints there are such creative facts as race, nationality,

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climate, history. Here is the column of deaths in the daily newspaper ; let me suppose that it contains the name of one dear to us—a brother or a friend. To the multitude it is only a name ; they scarcely pause to read it. *But to us* who know and love, the announcement is a sword-thrust that reaches the heart ; the whole world changes its look when we see that shadow and feel that sudden blow. Between the two points of view there is the fact of affection, and all the ties that grapple human souls together as with hooks of steel. So behind differences of standpoint there lie other and deeper differences—ancestry, environment, intellectual tradition and inheritance, or it may be a personal experience that has forged conviction in its glowing fires. Gods many and lords many, *but to us* the world is different, and there is a reason why the world is different ; *to us* the darkness is past and the true Light already shineth !

St. Paul is here setting over against the outlook of the great world the point of view taken by the little circle of the Church. A practical difficulty has arisen, the question of eating meats sacrificed to idols. He follows the matter out on grounds of expediency ; there at present we do not follow him, though there also he is worthy of himself and of the Gospel he serves. For the moment

he takes higher ground than that of expediency : he takes the ground of absolute truth. An idol is nothing. It is a mere name, even if, to lingering ignorance and superstition, it represents a real influence. There are gods many and lords many from the standpoint of surrounding paganism. There are pantheons fair and foul. There are hoary mythologies and new refinements of superstition. There are gods named and nameless. And to the average man who knows no better, these may cast a shadow that obscures the shadow of the Almighty. *But to us* there is another world, another atmosphere, another consciousness ; what have we to do any more with idols, either by serving them or by dreading them, we who have known the living and true God ? So with these three emphatic little words he withdraws his reader's gaze from the conventional outlook, and bids them survey the universe from the Christian standpoint. Watch him move to his point of view. " But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we through Him." I have hinted that most of our standpoints are formed by one or both of two things : tradition, whether family tradition, or national, or social, or racial ; and experience, which is not so diffused as tradi-

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tion, but sometimes makes up in intensity what it lacks in comprehensiveness. I think it is not hard to find these two things here—going to form the standpoint of the Apostle and his readers.

1. For here is, first, *a great tradition*. "There is but one God, of whom are all things." St. Paul did not invent that sublimely comprehensive thought. I think that for the moment he is writing as a Jew, even while he is addressing himself to Gentile converts—not forgetting his honourable ancestry, his place in the nation to which were committed the oracles of God. "There is but one God." Abraham is in these words. Moses is in them. The tables of stone are in them—David also, and Samuel, and especially the prophets. *To us*—who are the children of such fathers and the heirs of such traditions—*to us* "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things." But that is not the whole current of lofty tradition which flows round the island of this man's life: two currents have met and mingled just above the point where he stands beckoning his readers to join him. "And one Lord, Jesus Christ": the Christian tradition, with the freshness of the morning still upon it, has mingled with that of earlier days. *Jesus*—the human name suggests certain historic facts, too many to be here enumerated, too familiar

to need repetition. *Christ*—these facts fitted with certain earlier expectations, and the conviction was born and grew that He was the One who should come, and that men need not look for another. *Lord*—for the impression He made was so tremendous that adoration gathered instinctively around Him, and a new authority was established for the minds and consciences of men. And *One*—for the facts involved were so unique and so divine that, as there never had been, so there never could be, any one worthy to be compared with Him. Even if the world lay in darkness, to St. Paul and to his readers these great facts were known; these messages had come; these arguments had spread a net of salvation which could scarcely be escaped. With such teachings and traditions as these had God beset them behind and before and laid His hand upon them.

2. Yet it required more than these traditions to create the point of view; the tradition might have remained cold and powerless unless it had been kindled into *a great experience*. See how the experience comes to the surface; St. Paul could not keep it out of sight. “But to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and *we unto Him*.” The thinking here is very compact; there is a chapter in a phrase; there is a moral

and intellectual revolution in three words. There is not only one God, as a fact external to us—a fact which we might hear of by the hearing of the ear or hold by some logic of the mind. We unto Him!—turned towards Him, taught to live for Him, enabled to find the end and glory of our being in Him. St. Paul meant to quicken by the phrase the remembrance of the change which had come into the lives of these his readers, Gentiles who had turned from idols to serve the living and true God. So also with the specifically New Testament teaching which had blended with the older tradition: it too was not only a tradition but an experience. See how that also comes out: “One Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and *we through Him*.” Again the thought is concentrated to the uttermost: there is a chapter in a phrase; there is a miracle of regeneration in three words. We are what we are through Him. We are brought near to the living God through Him. We are raised from death into life through Him. In this speaks the consciousness to which Christianity is not only a tradition but a life, not only a memorial but a new creation—and Christ not only a historical personality, but a Saviour, working inward miracles of power and grace.

3. So the Christian standpoint was taken;

the earth was surveyed from a new altitude and heaven observed from a new meridian. It only remains to note the difference that this made. It is easier to illustrate this difference than to summarize it. The New Testament is the only adequate summary—to which the thought of the Church in the early centuries, as men slowly adjusted themselves to the new universe they now beheld, is at once supplement and commentary. One or two illustrations of the effect of the new point of view must suffice.

The Old Testament became a new book. Its central mysteries were unlocked. Its various parts were seen to be strung together on a thread of gold. It was felt to be a book with movement in it, and infinite desire ; and the movement was understood now in the light of the historical climax that had come to be its end and crown. It confessed its own incompleteness, and cried aloud with many herald voices that were never adequately interpreted until God Himself supplied the interpretation in the fullness of the time. It is no exaggeration to say that the men who took the Christian standpoint felt that the Old Testament was for the first time profoundly and adequately understood. The forest was cut open. The lane was filled with sunlight. The sunlight was Jesus Christ. It was not a mere standpoint that

did this; it was a fellowship. He Himself walked with them; and their hearts burned within them as He opened to them the Scriptures.

The thought of the time found a new centre round which to arrange itself. The Christian thinkers did not reject all the thought of their own day; they would have been strangely inconsistent if they had done so, believing as they did in the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. A sufficient illustration is St. John's use of the idea of the Word, which had long been employed both in Jewish and Greek philosophy ere it was put to a Christian use. This idea, like the Old Testament, lay waiting for its adequate interpretation, and that came with Jesus Christ; it was seen from the Christian point of view. The early Christian apologists delight to attempt the very task in which St. John set them so illustrious an example; they link Christianity to the good that had gone before; they view that good as crowned and confirmed in the new Revelation: the good had lain waiting in the world, until the day when the Best was given. "The Incarnation reorientated the philosophy of Christian thinkers, much as in later days the Copernican astronomy reorientated our views of the physical universe, and

with equal legitimacy in either case.”¹ For Christian men the change from B.C. to A.D. marked a difference greater than years could measure. Their thoughts had found a new orbit and obeyed the law of a new gravitation; they knew now that the centre of Truth was the Word Incarnate; with the wisdom of those who face facts they adjusted their intellectual universe to make room for Him, and He was not dwarfed by it, but remained supreme in it, the Crown of all the truth that had been, the Promise of all the truth that was yet to be.

And the world and its history received a new interpretation. Disordered and sinful though the world might be, it was really a divine world; it was in its inmost being and purpose a Christian world. My text with its magnificent breadth and courage is sufficient illustration; even things sacrificed to idols could not altogether lose the traces of their divine origin: “to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things.” Everywhere there could be read the signature of the Infinite Power, Wisdom and Love; everywhere could be heard the whisper of the Everlasting Reason, the Word that had become Incarnate once and once only, but was diffused throughout

¹ Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 115.

all space and time. It is a common experience for men to find in a book what they bring to it. It was said long ago that some people thought Homer a Stoic ; others found him somewhat Epicurean ; others again made him a Peripatetic or an Academician : in other words, they read their own doctrines in him ; they brought certain things to the reading and found what they brought. So, and with more truth and reason, those who took the Christian standpoint found in the world the divinity and the Christianity they brought to their survey. All things came from the One Source. All things worked together for the same good end. And as the world came out of the One Creative Wisdom, so its final destiny was to be conquered by the One Redeeming Love.

Now as for ourselves, we are at least half-way to the Christian point of view because the Christian tradition encompasses our lives. To some, for reasons we cannot know meantime, have come evil traditions and teachings of death, *but to us* the good word of God ; to some an evil ancestry, but to us a great cloud of witnesses ; to some little save haunting questions and lingering shadows, but to us the light of the Threefold Name ; to some the cold winds and creeping mists, but to us a spiritual climate where our

souls can live and grow. And then the Divine grace waits to turn for us also the tradition into an experience—to lead us to the standpoint and to open our eyes that we may see. We must not be content with the tradition, we must seek the experience. If we seek it with our whole hearts we shall find it ; we shall find the happiness of those who believe so much in the one God and Father that they live unto Him, who keep so near to the one Lord Jesus Christ that they become through Him all that God means them to be. So *to us*, with the firmness of the Christian standpoint under our feet, there shall be the clearness of the Christian outlook upwards and onwards. For here, as nowhere else in the round world of human experience, two things are true. Here we see that the skies are opened ; from this standpoint—

“ At our doors, our hands,
On every side, the earth puts forth a bridge,
Or lifts a ladder, or a path makes smooth
From less to great, till earth of all the worlds
Is nighest thing to heaven, and stars to man : ” ¹

to us the holy traffic of prayer, binding the seen and the unseen into one, is as reasonable and possible as the commerce that on earth binds the nations together. And here also we see that the

¹ A. E. Waite, *Strange Houses of Sleep*, p. 32.

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future is bright ; from the Christian standpoint the joy of Pisgah renews itself to souls on pilgrimage ; *to us* there is Canaan across the flood and sunrise beyond the setting sun.

II

ON PREACHING TO ONESELF

“ Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest ; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.”
—JOB iv. 3-5.

THE friends of Job have an unsavoury reputation, but they are not perhaps so black as they are usually painted. And Eliphaz, the first of the friends to speak, the friend who speaks here, deserves some honour and reverence, and is evidently intended in the scheme of the poem to receive it. He is the oldest of the three friends. He speaks with more quietness, more dignity, and more consideration than the others. It is suggested that there is in him a touch of the seer, if not of the prophet : witness his own account of the vision by night in which there was brought home to him the thought of the exalted purity of God. And here he hits his mark, and his words are full of a sanctified common sense. The previ-

ous chapter is full of Job's wild protests against the misery of his circumstances, his denunciations of life, his longings for death. And the point that Eliphaz makes here is this. Job had in his time been a teacher and helper of others ; his ministry had been a ministry of encouragement and consolation. " But now "—here Eliphaz, having prepared his shaft, sends it home—" it is come upon *thee*, and thou faintest ; it toucheth *thee*, and thou art troubled." The man who was successful as a preacher to others was not quite so successful as a preacher to himself ; the consolations he had ministered so readily and profitably to others somehow seemed to fail him when he needed them for himself. " Physician, heal thyself," said Eliphaz in effect. But Job, meantime at least, was too sore, too much crushed, too much wounded by the thunderbolts of God, to do so with any success. And the words he had spoken so readily to other men seemed strangely remote from his own necessities. " It is come upon *thee* ; it toucheth *thee* " : and Job, who had been so ready in other cases with his ointments, had no salve for his own wounds.

It is a fairly common case. It is easy for some natures to preach to others ; it by no means follows that it is equally easy or natural for them to preach to themselves. It is the professional duty

of some men to preach to others ; if they shirk the added task of preaching to themselves, well, there are no very visible penalties or deprivations for that omission. Do not think, however, that ministers are the only preachers. The world is well populated with preachers, and often enough they are ungracious pastors who "reck not their own rede." The politicians preach, and are eloquent in telling the other side what ought to be done. But I do not know that they always take their own counsel home to themselves. There is a very convenient doctrine, which is useful to politicians of all parties to wear as a breastplate, to the effect that circumstances alter cases. Indeed we are all preachers upon occasion ; it is surprising how large a part of our time is occupied in telling other people what they ought to do. Parents are preachers by nature. Masters and tutors are preachers by their calling. It is the privilege of friendship to give good counsel—to tell the despondent to look at the bright side and the tempted to play the man. It is the duty of old age to share its knowledge with youth, and even when the hoary head is not present there is sometimes no lack of counsel, as dogmatic and infallible as only inexperience can be. Now I suppose it all helps to keep the world right. But my point is the point of Eliphaz : what about the

preachers? Having so many sermons for other people, have they any sermons left for themselves? It might be an advantage sometimes to preach to ourselves; it might even be a pleasant discipline if we went about it rightly. Alexander Smith tells us in *Dreamthorp* how he found it more profitable to preach to himself than to have another man preach to him. "I go to chapel from habit, although I have long ago lost the power of following a discourse. In my pew, and whilst the clergyman is going on, I think of the strangest things—of the tree at the window, of the congregation of the dead outside, of the wheat-fields and the corn-fields beyond and all around. And the odd thing is, that it is during sermon only that my mind flies off at a tangent and busies itself with things removed from the place and the circumstances. Whenever it is finished, fancy returns from her wanderings, and I am alive to the objects around me. The clergyman knows my humour, and is good Christian enough to forgive me; and he smiles good-humouredly when I ask him to let me have the chapel keys, that I may enter, when in the mood, and preach a sermon to myself. To my mind, an empty chapel is impressive, a crowded one comparatively a common-place affair. Alone, I could choose my own text, and my silent discourse

would not be without its practical applications." Now I have been good Christian enough to forgive myself for quoting that very latitudinarian passage because it takes me a part of the way I want to travel at present. But it does not take me quite all the way. The point Eliphaz made against Job was not that Job had failed to preach to himself, but that he had failed to preach to himself the same sermons as he had preached to others in similar circumstances. And I want to ask you and myself this question—whether we have so much faith in the words we speak to others, that when the need arises we shall be willing to apply them to ourselves. Let me illustrate what I mean.

1. Starting at the point involved in my text I begin with the case of *sorrow*. Sorrow comes to others—it may be bereavement; it may be sickness and suffering; it may be temporal loss and disaster. We cannot help seeing it come, as Job in the day of his prosperity may have seen the hurricane strike another man's tent or disease another man's body. We have our consolations to offer: sometimes the conventions of social life shut us up to offer them and leave us no escape; some of us may even consider ourselves adepts in the art of consolation, and may hasten to administer the conventional remedies. We counsel resignation, We preach trust and sub-

mission. We point out that every cloud has a silver lining. We quote texts about all things working together for good. It is all very beautiful and true, and may or may not give the help we desire to give. But my point is this—supposing that the sorrow came instead to *yourself*—in the words of Eliphaz, if it came upon *thee*, if it touched *thee*—would the consolations flow as easily round your own heart as they flowed from your lips round the hearts of others? Apparently Job's sermons to the sorrowful were all destroyed in the wreck of his fortunes, so that in the day of his own calamity he had not one left to preach to himself. And there have been some who in the day of other people's trouble were fountains of consolation, yet in the day of their own affliction their hearts have been hard as the rock and dry as the desert sands. Let us try in our quiet and sunlit days to keep ourselves in the love of God, and pray ourselves into the meaning of His promises, that in the time of our own calamity, if ever it comes, we may know where to turn and what to do.

2. Or take the opposite case of *prosperity*. It may be that some of us have great ideas of what ought to be done with money, when it is in other people's hands. If we lack the courage or the opportunity to preach to those who possess it,

we have homilies prepared in our minds which we feel would suit them admirably. Life is a stewardship. Wealth is a trust. Power and place and position are all so many opportunities of doing good. And if people could only be got to see that, how happy a place the world would be ! It is all true, sound and useful doctrine. But again I take up the point of Eliphaz. Supposing all this power and prosperity came upon *thee*—supposing it all were poured into *thy* bosom—what wouldst thou do with it ? Would you hold to your doctrines and put them into practice ? Would you have so much faith in them as to apply them to your own case, or would you grow cold and hard and selfish like the rest of the world ? You do not know ; but there is one way in which you can judge. How are you using what you already have ? He who is faithful in little is likely also to be faithful in that which is much. And the man who is mean on a slender income is not likely to develop a large heart merely because he inherits ten thousand a year. Let us live, whether we have little or much, very close to the Lord of Love, and for every sermon upon unselfishness which we preach to our neighbours let us preach two to ourselves. So even prosperity would not spoil us, nor obliterate from our spirits the sign of the Cross.

3. Or still keeping close to the great, common, elementary experiences of life, take the case of *temptation*. That is a subject on which many sermons are preached by a man to his fellows, and especially by the seniors to the juniors. You know what you tell your young people about temptation. You tell them it comes, sometimes from within, and sometimes from without. You tell them how omnipresent it is, so that the whole of life's journey must be a pilgrimage with girded loin and loosened sword. You tell them how insidious it is, lurking like a snake in the grass. You tell them how overpowering it is, so that they need the whole armour of God to help them to withstand in the evil day. You tell them how they need to keep watch and ward at Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, over every approach of sense, over the stirrings even of secret thought, if Mansoul is to stand unconquered. Well preached!—it is all most excellent and most necessary teaching; and they cannot have too much of such instruction as they leave the shelter of home, and make their perilous way across a war-swept world. But once more my point is the point of Eliphaz: supposing the onslaught of temptation is upon yourself, have you faith enough in your own counsel to carry it out? Do you not even think that the attitude of some of

the younger folk to their temptations might be influenced by the attitude they see *you* take up to *your* temptations? Your temptations may be different from theirs, but as real, and to their eyes quite as visible. Not once or twice has some patriarch—not Job but another—told his children to read their Bibles, and allowed the dust to gather upon the covers of his own ; or he has told them to keep watch over their tongues and tempers, and has kept his own temper on a very loose rein ; or he has warned them against the sins of the flesh, and sunk deeper and deeper before their eyes into a cold and calculating worldliness. It is easy to preach, but the life is the best sermon after all : it is the sign that a man has preached to himself and that to some purpose.

I will only add one thing. As I look back through history to trace the shining progress of God's saints, I notice this about them—that while some of them, golden-mouthed men, have been great as preachers to others, they have been greater still as preachers to themselves. They set their own house in order even while they tended the vineyard of the Lord. They kept their sharpest arrows for their own hearts even while they shot many a polished shaft at the enemies of the King. There is a quaint passage in the diary of

Thomas Boston, in which you see that fine, deep, painstaking soul preaching over again to himself the sermons he had preached to others. "I observed that Satan has overcome me, even in those things that I preached against. (1) Preaching at Dunse, I preached against immoderate sleep as a great waster of time ; and quickly after I fell into this. (2) Last Thursday I preached that unwatchfulness was the cause why it is not with God's people as in times past ; and the very same night my heart fell a-roving. (3) At this evening exercise I lectured on Hebrews xiii., and particularly that word 'Be content with such things as ye have' ; and immediately after this, dissatisfaction seized me, for which my heart abhors my heart. Wherefore, being convinced of my danger, I resolved, in the Lord's strength, from henceforth to make my sermons the subject of my Sabbath-night's meditation, and so to improve them for myself." I will go back farther and higher to the greatest of all the golden-tongued preachers who have ever instructed the world—the greatest next to the Master Himself. He is closing what practically amounts to a great sermon, full of the passion of the Gospel, full of the urgency of the loftiest ideals, all summed up in the phrase "So run that ye may obtain." But now hear how he goes on, with a humility that moves

the soul when one reads it : “ I therefore run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection : lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself ”— Paul the mightiest of missionaries—Paul the most conspicuous of the messengers of Christ ”— “ *lest I myself* should be a castaway ! ” So Paul preached his sermon over again to himself, and, as he so preached it, it was a sermon upon the broken ^{and} and the contrite heart. Do not think this is a message for ministers or apostles only. It is a message for all who have ever to counsel others. Indeed it is a message for all who ever receive counsel from others—for a sermon is only successful as each takes it home, and applies it not to his neighbour, but to himself. “ As they did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.” How easy and how natural in that moment for these men to begin to suspect one another, and to say, “ Lord, is it *he* ? ” But with all their faults, they were too honest and humble for that. “ They were exceeding sorrowful, and began to say unto Him, Lord, *is it I* ? ” So they took the Master’s warning and applied it to themselves. Brethren, if we do not preach to ourselves somewhat after this fashion, what other preaching will do us any

good ? But if we do so preach to ourselves, let us be sure that the ministry is ordained of God, and great shall be the harvest of it against the day of the Master's appearing.

III

RIZPAH

“And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. And it was told David what Rizpah had done.”—2 SAM. xxi. 10, 11.

THERE is something singularly arresting about this woman's grim and desperate figure: her story is told in four verses, yet somehow she stands out as one of the great tragic figures of the Old Testament narrative. Her story is the last chapter of a blood-feud, such as often went on from one generation to another among the eastern races of long ago; such indeed as may still be found in lands where men's blood is hot and their instinct of revenge deep and passionate. Think of these seven bodies swinging in the wind to be the scorn of all men and the prey of beasts and birds—two of her own sons and five more of the same storm-tossed house of Saul. The refusal of rites of burial was one of the favourite tragic themes of the ancient world. It was

the theme of the *Antigone* of Sophocles : Polyneices by a tyrant's decree was left unburied outside the walls of Thebes : Antigone, his sister, defied the decree, and finding none to help her, went forth alone to do the deed, though the penalty of disobedience was death. In that case, a larger issue is wrapped up in the story—the age-long problem of the relation of decrees of state to the conscience of the individual. But apart from that, in the ancient world the doom of lying unburied was one of the deepest dishonours that could be inflicted, and the duty of giving honourable rites of burial one of the obligations that pressed most urgently upon the nearest and dearest of the dead. Think of that instinct surging with all its primitive intensity in Rizpah's sore and desperate heart as she crept forth to the rock of doom in the beginning of barley harvest : she was a mother, and two of these were her sons, and all the seven belonged to her house. She could not bury them, but she would do what she could. If no palace or temple might be hung with black for these the sons of a king, God's mighty rocks should wear sackcloth and mourn with her for them. And if she had no strength to bury them, she had strength enough to defend them against dishonourable entombment in the maw of carrion beasts and birds. So she took

her post and set her watch. Somehow the reference to the harvest-field seems to heighten the vividness of the picture. How cheerily the reapers go about their work, scarcely casting a glance at the gibbets with this one wild crouching figure at their feet. The valleys are covered over with corn ; they shout for joy ; they also sing : how strangely Nature can sometimes mock a heavy heart ! Do you remember the man who sang—

“ Ye banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair ?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu’ of care ? ”

But Rizpah did not care whether the world around were glad or sorrowful, whether men noticed or passed by on the other side. She plucked some twigs and made a switch to keep off the birds by day ; she gathered some faggots and lit fires to keep off the wild beasts by night. And until the winter rains began to fall upon her—until indeed King David’s belated clemency relieved her, she kept her vigil of love and sorrow, unwearied and undismayed.

Now I wonder whether Rizpah in her own rudimentary and primeval way can teach us a little, first about human love, and then about the love Divine.

1. And first I should like you to look into this

story for a moment to remind yourself of the loyalty and the constancy of *human love*. One wants to use strong and emphatic words. Consider the nobility, the sublimity, the divinity of human love, as you sometimes see it tried by adversity and tested to the uttermost. Consider this woman : death has come to her loved ones—death and disaster and disgrace to her house. But Love—the Love that endureth all things and never faileth—incarnates itself in Rizpah ; and Love, enthroned on sackcloth, keeps watch beneath those shameful trees. There is nothing finer in the whole history of love, until at length the *Mater dolorosa* bent her steps to Calvary, and there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother. The poet sings of the love that—

“falters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.”

But Shakespeare ! thy true lover, melodiously as thou hast described him, is sometimes at least outmatched and outsoared. For love bears it out, as Rizpah’s did, not merely to the edge of doom, but beyond it, down to the very foot of the precipice : when all other helps are far removed and even hope is departed, love waits and watches, and renders such poor ministries as still are possible.

There is something essentially noble, sublime,

divine about this, on whatever level you find it. In Professor Bradley's *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, there is a singularly impressive lecture on the Sublime. After pointing out that we usually associate sublimity with size and strength, the lecturer goes on to show how there may be real sublimity without size or strength—a sublimity that is to be found occasionally even among the humblest, the weakest and the smallest of God's creatures. He quotes in illustration a story from Turgénief, the Russian novelist—

“ I was on my way home from hunting, and was walking up the garden avenue. My dog was running on in front of me. Suddenly he slackened his pace, and began to steal forward as though he scented game ahead. I looked along the avenue, and saw on the ground a young sparrow, its beak edged with yellow, and its head covered with soft down. It had fallen from the nest (a strong wind was blowing, and shaking the birches of the avenue) ; and there it sat and never stirred, except to stretch out its little half-grown wings in a helpless flutter. My dog was slowly approaching it, when, suddenly darting from the tree overhead, an old black-throated sparrow dropped like a stone right before his nose, and, all rumpled and flustered, with a plaintive desperate cry flung itself, once, twice, at his open jaws with

their great teeth. It would save its young one ; it screened it with its own body ; the tiny frame quivered with terror ; the little cries grew wild and hoarse ; it sank and died. It had sacrificed itself. What a huge monster the dog must have seemed to it ! And yet it could not stay up there on its safe bough. A power stronger than its own will tore it away. My dog stood still, and then slunk back, disconcerted. Plainly he too had to recognize that power. I called him to me ; and a feeling of reverence came over me as I passed on. Yes, do not laugh. It was really reverence I felt before that little heroic bird and the passionate outburst of its love. Love, I thought, is verily stronger than death and the terror of death. By love, only by love, is life sustained and moved."

There is room for reverence there. There is room for reverence where Rizpah sits defying men and wild beasts equally, for the sake of love's last ministry. There is room for reverence wherever you find a human love real enough to prove itself in patience, in self-denial, in sacrifice. Here is nobility indeed. Here is sublimity. Here is divinity clothed in clay. It may be a lover's love that wears out the days and years and knows no change in winter and rough weather. It may be a mother's love that hopes on after

every one else despairs and welcomes back a life that the world has cast away. It may be a brother's love, born for adversity, or a friend's love, that is nearest and truest when we need it most. It may be a son's or a daughter's love that is hidden within the four walls of a humble home—never reported, never applauded, never rewarded except by the sense of duty done—a love that perhaps has surrendered personal ambition for the sake of family duty and never dreams of regretting its sacrifice. If it has come within your personal experience, thank God for it. And when you meet it, take off the shoe from off your foot, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground. Do we not feel that even though the place of Rizpah's lonely watch be a place accursed, the love that burns in her heart and flames in her eyes sanctifies and beautifies the place, and the sackcloth of her loyal mourning is more honourable than cloth of gold ?

2. But now let your thoughts rise in the second place from human love to *love Divine*. Perhaps you do not see the step by which you will climb. Wait one moment. Consider this scene again—the landscape smiling with cornfields, in the foreground those ghastly gibbets, at the foot of them Rizpah mounting guard with love's pathetic loyalty. Not all the smiling of the cornfields

can hide from us the fact that it is an ugly world, a world seamed and scarred with sin and wrong, a cruel world—oh, so cruel ! We see that plainly enough—just as to-day neither the beauties of nature nor the joy of our personal possessions can hide from us the manifold mystery of the world's pain and wrong. But now in the centre of that cruel environment set Rizpah—only a little woman half-mad with grief and pain ; yet in her heart, beyond all doubt, there is love—flaming, shining, overcoming. I want to ask a question—*Who kindled that flame ?* The question is worth asking. It is worth asking now. For now, as then, it is indeed an ugly world, full of cruelties, full of perplexities, full of problems for faith that sometimes almost turn faith into stony despair. Yet in this world, so cruel and so dark, there is at least Love—Love in a hundred and a thousand forms, mother's love, father's love, love of husband and wife, love of friend and friend, love full of pity, love full of patience, love full of courage, love that suffers long and is kind ; love that envieth not, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; love that beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things ; love that has wings to bear all burdens, and feet to run all errands, and courage to laugh in the face of death. *Where did it come from ?* Who invented that

secret? Who gave the hearts and homes of men this priceless pearl? It takes God even to account for Rizpah. Many men are going about the world to-day with bags and srips over their shoulders, picking up proofs of the reality of God, and they will pick up things that are light as straws and small as dust to put in their proper places in the Museum of Argument. This suggests that there may be a God. And that suggests the same. And this other adds the weight of a grain to the cumulative proof. Now if we want proofs and arguments, we must not forget this—the strange fact that we call Love. All our fires are children of the mighty sun: we are told that we but liberate solar energy when in winter the great coal fire goes roaring up the chimney; we liberate solar energy when we light a candle or strike a lucifer match; and but for the great sun over our heads these lesser lights could never have been. Here is Love in its many forms—a light shining in a dark place—a light that is not one light but many lights, a galaxy, a constellation. The cause must be worthy of the effect. Is there not a gleam of the heavenly in Rizpah's rugged heart? Is there not in every form of true human love a kind of converging testimony to the Heart of the Eternal, who has put a piece of His own divinity within our very being, to save our

human nature from being altogether clod and clay ?

One of the greatest short stories ever written is Balzac's *The Atheist's Mass*. It tells of a famous Paris surgeon who was an Atheist. This surgeon had an assistant who was greatly devoted to him, and who was amazed one day to find his atheistic chief stealing into the Church of St. Sulpice to attend Mass. He was still more surprised to find that this was not an isolated occasion, but that the great surgeon attended Mass regularly four times a year. One day he asked for an explanation, and he got it. When the surgeon was a student he had been abjectly poor. He had had to scrape his way through college with scarcely money enough to feed himself, much less to pay his examination fees. He had been befriended by a poor water-carrier called Bourgeat. Bourgeat had shared with him his own scanty fare. Bourgeat had spent upon him his own hoarded savings. Bourgeat had sacrificed himself to make his protégé an educated man and had died upon the eve of success. And in memory of Bourgeat and his love and loyalty, the famous man, whom in obscurity he had befriended, went four times a year to Church to pray this prayer to whatever Gods there be : " If there is a sphere where after their death you place those

who have been perfect, think of good Bourgeat ; and if he has still anything to suffer, lay these sufferings on me, so that he may enter the sooner into what they call Paradise." " This," the surgeon said to his friend, " is all that a man who holds my opinions can allow himself. But I swear to you I would give my fortune for the sake of finding the faith of Bourgeat coming into my brain." Now I know there are few, if any, Atheists left. The old blatant Atheism is out of fashion. Men call themselves Agnostics now ; they wish they could believe : they collect scraps of evidence which perhaps might make it easier to believe. They might do worse than brood like Balzac's hero upon the love and kindness that have touched their own lives and sweetened so often life's bitter waters for them and others. Where did it come from ? Must it not have come from somewhere ? Can it be possible that the secret of it was caught by the Apostle who said, " We love because He first loved us ? " That is an answer that seems both adequate and reasonable.

Now Love's argument for God becomes still more appealing and impressive when we take in Christ, the King of love and the King of sorrow, holding for the moment no theories about Him, but merely viewing Him as a figure in history.

Take Rizpah and all the other loving hearts that have ever in love's name been brave and patient ; none are so wonderful as He, and none so calls aloud for explanation. The words of love He spoke, the deeds of love He did, the death of love He died, the character of love He displayed—it all must have a source. Where did He come from ? How can we account for Him, and for all the streams of beneficent influence that have flowed from His coming into the life of the world ? What if the Gospel answer be true—that He came out of the bosom of the Father ? He came to show us that there is a Father, and that the Father has a heart of Love, most wonderfully kind. This also is adequate and reasonable. And all the lights of love and pity from Rizpah on her grim gibbet-rock to Christ, and from Christ to the kindly lights that are shining still, are proofs and signs of the Greater Love at which they all are lit, from which they all have come—a Love sufficient to satisfy every heart and to save to the uttermost all needy and desperate souls. And even if the world seems sometimes to be the devil's, we will keep on believing that it is God's, because “ in the darkest spot of earth some love is found,” and in the midst of all the loves, all loves excelling, there is the Love Incarnate, the Revelation of the Father.

IV

THE REALMS OF CHANCE

“A certain man drew a bow at a venture.”—I KINGS
xxii. 34.

HOW heavy do you think were the odds against that arrow finding Ahab's body? “A certain man drew a bow in his simplicity,”—the Hebrew reads,—with a vacant mind, without any particular aim, just for a chance shot into the swaying host of soldiers. How many were the chances against its finding Ahab? Ahab was only one of a multitude and not conspicuously dressed: it is not easy to find a queen bee in a buzzing hive. And suppose the arrow did find Ahab, how many were the chances against its finding the place of junction between the upper and the lower armour where alone it could pierce him in a vital part? In each case there was an infinitude of chances against one, yet in each case the one chance carried it against the infinitude: the arrow found Ahab; it found also the joint in his armour. I want you to watch that arrow

very closely. It is worth watching. It suggests the element of chance that so often seems to be in the life of the world. Could anything be a completer symbol of chance? An arrow shot by a careless soldier in no particular direction according to a moment's wayward fancy—a shot without a target—a missile that might have hit or missed anybody; chance is no more perfectly symbolized by the throw of the dice than by such an arrow as this. But wait! look closer; watch the arrow a second time: is it chance or is it destiny? Is the arrow after all a symbol of what is accidental in life, or of what is predestinated? For it found the King of Israel, whom many more business-like arrows had sought in vain. I wonder whether, Ahab remembered Naboth, as his chariot turned to bear him out of the host, and as he lingered on the outskirts of the battle until he died at the setting of the sun. We cannot read this story without remembering Naboth. "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab, King of Israel, which is in Samaria; behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." I think that arrow was

bound to find him. I think it would have found him even though he had fled to the top of Carmel, or hidden himself in the jungle of Jordan. It looks as if the careless soldier who shot it were only an instrument, and as if God were Himself the real marksman. Was it chance or was it predestination? You can call it which you please according to your standpoint, but I think the believer in God gives the deeper answer. He will be inclined to say that the stone which killed Naboth came back in that arrow as though it had found wings, and that, however long God may delay His just judgments, His way is equal ere the day is done.

All this sets one thinking about those elements in life that are frequently summed up under the name of *chance*—chance arrows, chance wounds, chance joys, chance discoveries, chance disasters, chance anything you like to think of! Whatever we may make of it when we come to the deeper levels of meaning, there are a great many elements in life that are conveniently grouped together under the word *Chance*. They look like that from our standpoint: that is at any rate their surface aspect. The chance element in life works sometimes for joy, sometimes for sorrow and bitterness. Sometimes it works for joy. In that most charming open-air book,

Fisherman's Luck, Dr. Van Dyke discusses the fascination of the art of angling, and concludes that a large part of it lies just in this—that the fisherman never knows what will turn up; he never knows what fish will rise to his fly, or what bird will peep at him from the bushes, or what small adventures will diversify his day as he lingers by the river. “We are not fitted to live in a world where $a + b$ always equals c , and there is nothing more to follow. The interest of life's equation arrives with the appearance of x , the unknown quantity. . . . Do you remember Martin Luther's reasoning on the subject of ‘excellent large pike’? He maintains that God would never have created them so good to the taste, if He had not meant them to be eaten. And for the same reason I conclude that this world would never have been left so full of uncertainties, nor human nature framed so as to find a peculiar joy and exhilaration in meeting them bravely and cheerfully, if it had not been divinely intended that most of our amusement and much of our education should come from this source.” He judges wisely. Yet the same ingredient in life has its grim side also. Think of Ahab for a moment. Call him as many hard names as you please, and say, if you like, that he deserved his end. Yet you will agree that it was pitiful and mortifying to be the victim of a

chance shot—to escape all the spears that were searching for him and to fall before an arrow from a bow drawn at a venture. There would have been more dignity about it if he had died from a deliberate attack in the forefront of the battle; there would have been some glory even in his overthrow if he had fought with some protagonist on the other side, and the day had gone against him. But to die like this was hard: a man, not to speak of a king, is surely too great a being to be the sport of a wandering arrow. Yet how often things look like that! Chance has its scurvy tricks as well as its gay surprises. Men have come through great battles unscathed and died of a chance microbe. Men have by wise planning warded off great perils, and then fallen before some slight and sudden accident. Men have laid down the lines of mighty purposes, and some hidden flaw, impossible to foresee, has wrecked the glory of their enterprise. I suppose we human beings never look smaller or more pitiful than in moments such as these, when the chances of life seem to play with us as the tricky winds play with the fallen leaves, or as this random arrow played with a king's destiny.

But is there such a thing as Chance? Or is it merely an illusion, a name for something which does not exist? It is hard to say. It is at least

conceivable that there may be margins to the Divine purpose—margins wherein God, if I may reverently put it so, allows Himself freedom to play, and allows room to His works and creatures also to take their liberty. If I throw the dice, is the result of the throw determined beforehand? If the scene of my text had been not a battlefield with grave interests at stake, but some pleasure ground where sportive boys played with bow and arrow, could we have affirmed that every aim was guided? Apelles was painting a picture of a horse, and wanted to depict the foam on the horse's mouth. Dissatisfied with his work and fretful because of his failure he threw a sponge at his picture. The sponge hit the very place where he had been working and produced the likeness of the foam he had been labouring in vain to create. Was that fretful throw guided by a higher Power? I suppose we should all feel instinctively that it was straining the doctrine of an overruling Providence to an artificial and absurd extent to give a definitely affirmative answer to questions such as these. And yet if you allow chance to come in at all, even in small things such as these, you are left with a problem; where is the line to be drawn? What is the border-line which separates the realm of accident from the realm of Providence, the sportive margin of God's plan

from the central purpose that bears steadfastly upon its way? On the whole it seems wiser to believe that there is some space left for chance within the manifold scheme of Providence though the limits of it cannot be defined by us. It seems worthier of God to have it so, for His reign is the perfect reign, and His power is the perfect power. And His Kingdom looks more ideally complete if it be not too absolutely a mechanism—if there be within the broad limits of it manifold contingencies which He in the sweep of His plan includes and overrules. It is His glory to permit freedom—the freedom of the dancing leaf, the freedom of the flying bird, the freedom even of the wayward will of man, and over and around that freedom to reign in absolute dominion, from everlasting to everlasting God and King.

Yet the doctrine of chance is harder to reconcile with faith when we turn to the darker side of life, to the happenings that are stern and terrible. Even then, as we have seen, things wear the aspect of chance. That is the note on which Mr. Thomas Hardy closes the story of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*—unhappy Tess, hunted down hill by the sins of others and by the force of circumstance, until at last she was hanged for her crime. “The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess.” His sport!—it looks like it, does it

not?—when frail men and women are made the playthings of forces physical or moral that seem mighty beyond control. Yet when we reach that deepest depth of pessimism our despair almost becomes its own cure. The doctrine of Chance and the doctrine of Faith stand over against one another: we have to make our choice between them; and whatever the sight of the eyes may say, there seems to be deep reason in the assertion of the soul, that if there be such a thing as chance at all, it is either a surface aspect merely, or at any rate a fact of very limited content: the winds cannot play with the fallen leaves any more than is allowed; there is one who

“plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.”

And so it happens that many of the great men of human history—men who have come through troubled and stormy times, and who have seen the best and the worst that chance and change could do—have been driven in upon a kind of high fatalism of their own: they have not only seen the chance arrows flying; they have seen in some form or another the directing Hand. One day in 1806 one of Napoleon's generals came suddenly upon his Imperial Master, whom he found brooding in deep thought. Napoleon suddenly awoke from his reverie, seized the general by the arm

and dragged him to the window of the room. "Look up!" he cried. The general looked up and saw nothing. "What?" Napoleon cried, "do you see nothing? It is my Star; it is shining before you; it has never left me; it leads me on." Call it a hallucination if you like; it is a symbolic hallucination; many strong men and great minds have had it wrought deeply into their very being—the sense of an increasing purpose, calling them, leading them, subduing all chances to itself. The doctrine reaches its purest and loftiest form in Christ. He believed in Providence. He believed in "the providence of the trifle." He believed that in the deepest sense there was no chance and no accident. Some of His words are astonishingly strong and clear. "Not a sparrow falleth without your Father." "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." "Thou couldst have no power against Me except it were given thee from above." So however much He might sometimes sojourn for refreshment in the playful margins of God's providence—as when He watched the ripples upon the lake or the little joyous birds—He dwelt more habitually upon the deeper level, where chance did not reign, still less fate, but the Providence that was law and love and liberty in one, "the will of My Father which is in heaven."

As we leave the subject, turn the light of all this in three directions,—on the things we suffer, on the things we do, and on the things we cannot understand.

1. There are *the things we suffer*. To other eyes they look perhaps like evil chances. But depend upon it, God desires them to have for ourselves a deeper meaning. The soldier's arrow was to Ahab God's messenger of judgment, though to other eyes it was only a chance. Some of us have heard in some of God's stern providences a note like that, whispering to our own consciences, though no other man dreamed of such a message, "Thy deeds have come upon thee; thy past has found thee out." Even if it be not judgment, there may be other meanings: the chastisements of love are no chance, but wisest discipline. At the least they bid us submit. They bid us trust. They bid us overcome by self-surrender. They bid us remember Christ, who in taking up His Cross and dying upon it, found no evil chance, but an altar of perfect worship.

2. And then there are *the things we do*. For the moment we do not identify ourselves with Ahab, nor think of the arrows rankling in ourselves: we are rather the soldier fingering his bow and wondering vaguely where to shoot. "He drew a bow in his simplicity," and we are often like that.

We shoot into the dark ; we speak words that shall lodge we cannot tell where ; we do deeds that may be the little causes of great events. The lesson is the lesson of prayer—" Guide Thou me, help Thou me, keep Thou me "—that our frail lives may be no wayward wanderings, but the instruments of a mighty purpose. This soldier, though he knew it not, was an instrument of judgment : none of us will covet such a mission as that, though in God's strange providence it may come to us. Suppose then we take the poet's familiar words for a picture of what we should like to do with our bow and arrow—

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where ;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where ;
For who has sight so keen and strong
That it can follow the flight of song ?

Long, long afterward in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke ;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend."

God may give even the humblest of us power to speak some winged word that shall fly to another life with a message of help and comfort ; to do some kindly deed that shall not be lost in the

void, but fit into its own place in the plan of the perfect Wisdom.

3. And then there are *the things we cannot understand*. For the moment we do not identify ourselves with Ahab wounded ; nor are we the soldier with his bow and arrow ; we are now on the margin of the battlefield, watching the arrows fly to and fro—as it seems, unguided, uncontrolled. Nay ! we are on the edge of the world-battlefield, where not only arrows fly, but thunderbolts, earthquakes, storms, pestilences, disasters widespread and manifold, that look so unnecessary, so gratuitous, so unreasonable, so much liker the reign of chance and fate than the will of a loving Father. What shall we make of them ? Even if we have not insight enough to interpret them, let us try to find patience to wait until their meaning is made plain in the light of a brighter day. There may sometimes be a meaning of judgment as there was in the arrow that laid Ahab low, but on that it is not wise for us to dogmatize. There is much more likely to be a meaning of mercy, to be revealed and expounded by and by. Meantime the duty of the believing heart is to live near to God, and to look at all that seems most like chance and accident in the light of His wisdom and love. It is the only way of strength and peace. It is to such hearts that

there comes the secret whisper of the Unseen Friend : " Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day." So until the battle with all its chances and changes is over, he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

V

EMOTIONALISM

"There sat women weeping for Tammuz."—EZEK.
viii. 14.

THE story of Tammuz was one of the most widely prevalent legends of the ancient world. It probably had its origin in Babylonia. Tammuz was the sun-god, the emblem of life and youth, beloved of the goddess Istar. But he was slain by the tusk of the great boar Winter, and each year as winter came round the death of Tammuz the Sun-god was celebrated by orgies of grief, led by the wailing men and wailing women. Then the legend passed westward, taking different shapes in different lands. Istar became Venus; Tammuz was renamed Adonis; and at many a pagan shrine in Western Asia and Eastern Europe the death of Adonis was celebrated annually with cries and tears. There was a famous seat of this cult in the north of Palestine near Beyrout. There Tammuz seems to have been, not the Sun-god, but the symbol of the vegetation of spring

which died before the heats of summer. At a certain point in the year, a river of that district washes down from the slopes of Lebanon vast quantities of red soil. They viewed this discoloration of the water as the blood of Tammuz ; once more the youthful deity was slain by the boar's tusk upon the mountains ; and they wept for him for several nights and days. We have abundant proof in the Old Testament as to the difficulty of keeping the surrounding cults of Paganism from leaving their mark upon the life of Israel : fenced off though Israel was in many ways from her surroundings, there was a strong temptation to her to be like her neighbours ; and here is a proof that in the hour of Israel's decadence this Pagan cult had even found its way to Jerusalem. Viewed from the merely literary or historic standpoint, there is a certain touch of poetry in the practice of weeping for Tammuz : it was an attempt of the human heart, in the childhood of the human understanding, to express its sympathy with and its concern for the failing powers of nature. But you can understand the feelings of a prophet like Ezekiel, to whom Paganism was not a historical or literary study, but a living and powerful reality, fighting with the true God for the possession of the hearts of men ; you can understand his disgust and indigna-

tion when at the very gate of God's Temple in Jerusalem he saw "women weeping for Tammuz."

Now I do not take this text in order to interest you merely in a piece of archæology. Tammuz is ancient history now, but when we think about this old practice of weeping for Tammuz we touch something that is curiously abiding in human nature. Take this account of a funeral in an out-of-the-way corner in modern Ireland. "While the grave was being opened, the women sat down among the flat tomb-stones, bordered with a pale fringe of early bracken, and began the wild *keen* or crying for the dead. Each old woman, as she took her turn in the leading recitative, seemed possessed for the moment with a profound ecstasy of grief, swaying to and fro, and bending her forehead to the stone before her, while she called out to the dead with a perpetually recurring chant of sobs. All round the graveyard other wrinkled women looked out from under the deep red petticoats that cloaked them, rocked themselves with the same rhythm, and intoned the inarticulate chant that is sustained by all as an accompaniment . . . When the coffin was in the grave, and the thunder had rolled away across the hills of Clare, the *keen* broke out again more passionately than before. This grief of the *keen* is no personal complaint for the death of one woman over

eighty years, but seems to contain the whole passionate rage that lurks somewhere in every native of the island. In this cry of pain the inner consciousness of the people seems to lay itself bare for an instant, and to reveal the mood of beings who feel their isolation in the face of a universe that wars on them with winds and seas. They are usually silent, but in the presence of death all outward show of indifference or patience is forgotten, and they shriek with pitiable despair before the horror of the fate to which they all are doomed.”¹ Is there not something essentially akin in the old-world weeping for Tammuz, and such an orgy of emotion beside the Irish grave? They are both instinctive, passionate and uncontrolled; they are both called forth in presence of death and decay; and they are both destitute of ethical fruitfulness—rivers of tears that water no gardens and wash away no sins.

The matter comes nearer even than modern Ireland: it brings us close to the strain of emotion which lurks in every one of us, which may run to waste in mere emotionalism, unrestrained and unfruitful, as it did in the old-world weepers for Tammuz, or may be so controlled and guided as to prove a positive source of moral and spiritual energy. There may be very little of it in some of

¹ J. M. Synge, *The Aran Islands*.

us ; we may think we belong to what Professor James calls the "robust Philistine type, for ever offering its biceps to be felt, thumping its breast, and thanking Heaven that it hasn't a single morbid fibre in its composition." But even the robust Philistine is likely to have a soft spot somewhere, and may sometimes, to his own surprise and to the surprise of others, melt into tears in presence of the mystery of things, or before some great pressure of love or sorrow or shame. And in some there is so much of this emotional power that it tends to run to waste in mere sentimentality : there are some who positively love the luxury of grief, or at any rate run to tears as the line of least resistance. And this is a fact which has its personal, its social, and its religious bearings.

1. It has its *personal* bearings. It is for some a danger and a temptation inherent in their own constitution. Mr. Barrie has preached an unforgettable sermon upon it in his greatest study of character—the sentimental youth who runs more to tears than to deeds, who loves his own moist moments, who finds refuge in the rush of his emotions alike from the duties that challenge and the sins that taunt and mock. Grant that the picture is an exaggeration, it is the exaggeration of a reality ; it is the way some lives go

to waste, in an emotionalism which produces nothing, in a sentimentality which gazes upon a noble purpose from afar with admiration but refuses to be harnessed to its service. If the waste of energy is not in tears, it may be in words—talk that runs in torrents but turns no wheels and bears no [ships of purpose upon its bosom. There are drunkards who will weep as easily as children over their own naughtiness, but for all their weeping they never quit their sin. There are men and women who will talk endlessly about their feelings, experiences, failures, hopes, but for all their talk they never seem to be farther upon the way. It is a kind of spiritual catarrh which may very easily become chronic. That is wise counsel of Newman's in the famous little poem entitled *Flowers without fruit*—

“ Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng ;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong.
But he who lets his feelings run
In soft luxuriant flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done
And faints at every woe.”

The lesson is that we have only a certain amount of energy to spend, and if we waste too much of

it in mere emotion we shall not have enough left for the urgent, heroic duties of life.

2. The same matter has its *social* bearings—indeed has a very direct bearing on some of the most pressing problems of to-day. We are beginning to escape a little now from the dominance of mere sentimentality in regard to the needs of our social life, but it is by no means too soon: we have had many illustrations of the saying that the work of the wise is to undo the mistakes of the good; and perhaps we are preparing for ourselves a very sharp reaction in which sentiment will be too much forgotten. There has been any amount of sentimentality without knowledge, the sentimentality which was much too luxurious to search out the persons and the objects deserving of its pity, the emotionalism which was much too vague to make any study of causes and effects, or to seek remedies other than the easiest and nearest. For the sentimentality I speak of was not only ignorant but lazy: it gave to the beggar at the door, and so satisfied its own conscience, imagining it had exhausted its duty. The result was that the beggar at the door sent for his brethren, and begat children to carry on the enterprise, while the honest poor, too proud to beg, starved unnoticed, and the causes of poverty went without study and

without treatment. We are beginning to emerge from the merely sentimental way of looking at our social problems. We have our settlements where students get face to face with facts. We have our serious books giving us gleams of insight into the principles of things. We are beginning to penetrate at least a little way below the surface. There is nothing to be said against sentiment in its proper place; the danger lies in sentiment run to seed, in mere sentimentality, uninformed, unguided, and too lazy for any real work. The whole apparatus of mendicancy would be impossible were it not for this irrational, persistent streak of sentimentality in human nature, which can be exploited by any piteous tale. Let us love and pity, for love is of God, and pity is a Christian grace. But love without knowledge can do vast harm, and pity that sits still, content with tears, is not on a much higher level than the weeping for Tammuz.

3. There is something here bearing on *Religion* also, for that also can run to waste in mere, unproductive emotionalism. There are Good Friday celebrations in Calabria which take a form somewhat like this: a wax image of the Saviour is brought into the church and laid before the altar surrounded by a guard of honour, and the congregation give way to uncontrollable grief, sobbing,

moaning, crying. There you have something directly akin to the primitive weeping for Tammuz or to the keening at an Irish funeral—the primeval, inherent emotionalism of the human heart surging to the surface, spite of all the conventions of civilization, and letting itself go without restraint. Does it do any moral or practical good? I doubt it, even though it be an image of Christ they weep over. And perhaps nearer to ourselves, especially when there is strong religious excitement in the air, the same danger needs to be guarded against—an emotionalism that is not informed by knowledge and that does not bear fruit in action. There is a merely sentimental way of studying the love and sorrow of Christ. It requires to be watched and guided. It is good for us sometimes to hear Faber say, “O come and mourn with me awhile,” and like him to ask ourselves—

“Have we no tears to shed for Him
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?”

Yet unless it is going to issue in something practical, a little of that is as much as is healthy and safe. I wonder what our Lord meant by that abrupt command, “Weep not for Me,” to the women who lamented Him upon the dolorous way. He did not ask their pity; He did not need

it; His Crown of thorns was a diadem of glory, and His tottering steps bore Him to the redemption of the world and to the joy of a Saviourhood that should endure for ever and for ever. "Weep not for Me," He said: they had other things to look to, for themselves and for their children.

The New Testament gives us two great safeguards against mere sentimentality as we study the Cross of Christ. The first is *the theology of the Cross*. Here at least is food for thought, and when thought and emotion mingle the danger of mere emotionalism is in large measure gone. In the light of the high, deep truths which according to the New Testament meet and centre in the Cross, there is nothing here for maudlin tearfulness; there is a vast necessity of the scheme of things, a mighty revelation of the heart of God, a stupendous token of the Divine victory through sacrifice. And in presence of it, there is room certainly for tears—the wonder is that we can be so emotionless—but they will be tears of adoration and of thanksgiving. The other safeguard is *the lesson of the Cross*. It is not only a theology, it is an ethic. It is not only a stimulant to the emotions; it is, or it ought to be, a stimulant to the emotions and to the conscience equally and together. Its shadow is consecration. Its lesson is self-surrender. Its appeal is for loyal and

loving obedience. "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his Cross and follow Me." And all emotion is safe and wise which pours itself into that channel. "If ye love Me," the Master said in the night on which He was betrayed. If ye love Me! Of course, they loved Him. And emotion surged high that night of passionate farewell. Yet it seemed as if amid all their mutual tenderness He were careful to guard against *mere* emotion: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." He is right, and we are wrong unless we learn His lesson. The women weeping for Tammuz are a whole universe away from the woman who knelt at Christ's feet, because the outcome of her sorrow was this, that she loved much and sinned no more. And we too need be "nothing ashamed of tears upon His feet" if our emotion bears like fruit, and leads us to a consecration as real and as permanent.

VI

THE DISCIPLINE OF WAITING

“Waiting . . .”—ST. LUKE ii. 25.

WAITING!—it is a hard word, a hateful word, but it corresponds to one of the most frequent elements in human experience. Politicians waiting for office and place and power ; husbandmen waiting for the precious fruits of the earth ; merchants waiting for a revival of trade ; the suffering and the sorrowful waiting for “ the far-off interest of tears ” ; Penelope waiting for the return of Ulysses, and Enoch Arden waiting for the ship that shall bring him home—the world is full of it, and the cry of it goes up into the ears of Heaven ! Sometimes by a succession of cases or incidents there is borne in upon us the amount of waiting there is in the life of man. We see one man waiting for his opportunity, another waiting for his recompense ; we see one heart waiting the mysterious leisure of God, another fretting against the procrastinations of man ; we see one pair of eyes after another straining

upon the misty sea-beach to greet some ship that never comes to port. And in such moods we wonder whether waiting be not more than the half of life ; and if so, why it should be so.

This will help us, then, to sympathize with those who were *waiting* for the consolation of Israel. These were the souls who had graduated in the school of the prophets—perhaps indeed even in an older school, the school which the patriarchs built and the prophets only enlarged. They were following a very old fashion—one of the oldest fashions in the world—these men who waited. Was it not written in one of the most ancient fragments of their literature, “ I have waited for Thy salvation, O God ! ” And when the prophets came, to enlarge hope to the measure of their own spacious minds, and to brighten it with many new and wonderful promises, the habit of a holy expectation was abundantly deepened and confirmed. The phrase I have taken for my text is an allusion to one special passage of prophetic hope. Read “ comfort ” instead of “ consolation ” and you will see the allusion at once : it is a reminiscence of the sweet music of the famous passage in Isaiah, “ Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.” The music of that word never quite left the heart of Jerusalem ; it lingered with her in days of strife

and misfortune—the thought that the comfort was coming ; it indeed gave a name to the Messiah—He was often spoken of as “ the Comforter ” : I suppose Christ alludes to that when He speaks of sending *another* Comforter. Of course there were many in Israel who did not care about this promised comfort, or who interpreted it in so materialistic and worldly a way that they got quite out of touch with the real line of God’s working. But there were some who waited for the consolation of Israel, spiritual folk with high and holy aims, saturated with the very spirit of the prophets : through the case of Simeon you look, as through a window, into the spirit of this whole class, God’s remnant in forgetful Israel. And it was among such souls as these—Simeon, Anna, the disciples of John the Baptist—many of God’s nameless remembrancers—“ who they were no man knows ; what they were all men know ”—that Christ found His readiest welcome and the foretaste of His inheritance. They were waiting for the comfort of Israel, and they were ready when the glory of the Lord was revealed.

I wish to speak of this *discipline of waiting* which is so large a part of God’s appointed discipline alike for His Church as a whole and for our separate lives.

I. And in the first place it is part of God’s

appointed discipline for *His Church*. She is not allowed to win her victories all at once ; it is by little and little that He drives out her foes. She is not allowed to reap her harvest all at once : first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. She is not allowed to occupy her territories all at once : she has to plant her outposts, and clear her forests, and bring out her colonists, and work often with the sword and the trowel together at her hand. This is nothing to be surprised at ; it is the law of all history. If ever a nation was pricked and spurred and stimulated and chastened and emptied from vessel to vessel in order to teach her that the best was yet to be, that nation was Israel. And when the new Israel, the Church of the living God, was called into being, it was very evident that she was to be sent to the same school. Almost her earliest lesson was the lesson of waiting—not to rush with untaught and unsanctified hands at her great task, but to wait until the needed preparation came. “ He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but *wait* for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me.” And soon the lesson took another form, which to this day we are trying to learn—the form that James gave it when he said, “ Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of

the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is the lesson—however you may hammer it into dogmas or throw it into pictures—the lesson that the perfect Kingdom is not merely something which springs up out of the earth in response to the toil of man, and for which therefore we must *work*,—but something which comes down out of heaven from God and for which therefore we must *wait*. Perhaps the lesson of waiting is not the first lesson in the order of the Christian logic. When men make it that, they are apt to subside into a nerveless, forceless quietism, an almost Mohammedan fatalism, a dreamy forgetfulness of the part man can play in shaping alike his own destiny and the destiny of the world. The first lesson in the divine order is *work*. And the second is *pray*, because " if prayer without work be presumption, work without prayer is Atheism." But when both these lessons are learned and in process of practice, the third lesson is *wait*. It is this that carries the Church through difficulties, depressions, postponements, antagonisms. This lesson is as winter raiment for the Church's soul. It is as hidden manna when the wilderness stretches farther than

she dreamed, and the land of promise is many leagues away. The laws of Harvest say *Wait*. And the discipline of the divine Love says *Wait*. And sometimes the Church's own feeble life and fumbling methods tell her she must wait. And many a word of God says *Wait*. The Church has not always digested the lesson as well as she might: she has often been very childish, very impatient. *Persecution* has been one of her ways of expressing her impatience. She has seized the reaping-hook and kindled the furnace-fire, and set herself to work on her half-grown fields to separate between the tares and the wheat, forgetting that the great Master said, "Let both grow together until the harvest." And *Sensationalism* has been another of the proofs of her impatience. Because men were not coming quickly enough, she has manufactured very large drums and beaten them with very large drumsticks; and the gaping crowd has gaped for a while, and then has grown tired of the noise and has passed on to gape elsewhere. And *Shallowness* has been another of the proofs of her impatience: the Catholic has assumed that every one who was baptized was regenerated, and the Protestant has sometimes assumed that every one who sobbed was saved; and the Church has been too impatient to be thorough in her workmanship, too

ready to compile her statistics without any searching or sifting, too forgetful of the deep and thorough and many-sided process that goes to the making of a soul. And again and again she has had to come back to the lesson—to work all you can and to pray all you can, but when you have worked and prayed to wait patiently for God. The work is His. The harvest is His. The future is His. The times and the seasons are in His hand. The Church must learn to wait—not in the laziness of inactivity, but in the obedience of service; not in the gloom of despair, but in the patience of hope. And as she waits for whatever signs upon the sky or workings upon the earth it shall please God to send, something like this is her song—

“ His Love

Shall yet work out a wondrous work, above
All wonders of His earth and seas and skies;
Love—love that once for all did agonize—
Shall conquer all things to itself! if late
Or soon this fall, I ask not nor surmise—
And when my God is waiting, I can wait!”¹

2. I pass from the Church as a whole to the *individual life*, for in far more cases than you have any idea of, this seems to be God’s appointed discipline. It sometimes oppresses and depresses

¹ Dora Greenwell, *Carmina Crucis*.

one to discover how many there are to whom God has given, not the solemn joy of working, not the awful joy of fighting, but the harder task of waiting. And all they can do is to wait—wait for consolation, wait for explanation, wait for the pulling down of barriers and the moving of the pillar of light and fire. It is no new experience: it is as old as the education of man. Abraham had long to wait before the child of promise was born. Moses had long to wait, and that in the wilderness, before he was a leader of men. Job had long to wait ere God gave him his recompense: ye have heard of the patience of Job. I look at such a case as that of St. John, and notice how it was only after all his comrades were dead and gone, and he himself in his old age, that he came to his full power and influence as a Christian apostle. I read the story of Dante, and see how he waited—waited for recognition, waited for appreciation, waited for a return to home and friends and property, and how the heavens were as brass above him and the ungrateful earth as iron beneath him even until the end. I see how many of the world's noblest and best have lived without honour and died unsung: their recognition came, but it came too late to bring any gladness into their own lives: the world awakened up only after they were gone, to realize that there

had been within it the harbingers of the future and the messengers of God. Now I find the same thing going on still. I find some souls waiting for their *opportunity*—an opportunity that never seems to come: they are cribbed, cabined and confined in a small and narrow sphere, hemmed in as with gates of brass and bars of iron. I find lives that are fettered and baffled by *ill-health*, and they have to wait for the fullness of liberty and power: they have spent much on many physicians but are no whit better: they are (as we put it in homely phrase) “on the shelf,” and they must content themselves to lie on the shelf, until God sees fit to liberate them and send them out again to the vineyard and the market-place. I find souls that are shadowed long by *intellectual difficulty and perplexity*: they read and they think and they pray, but, perhaps because of temperament, perhaps because of circumstances, they do not find truth easy of access, they can but tarry with their faces towards the sunrising, waiting for the day to dawn. I find many a husbandman that has to wait long for *harvest*: I do not mean the harvest of the fields; I mean the harvest of civilization, and of education, and of religion: fruits like these ripen but slowly, and the man who has them under his care in the Church or in the State, has more need

of patience than any other worker in the universe. And what shall we say to those for whom, though they have waited long, the harvest has *never* ripened, the opportunity has *never* come, the waiting has ended or seems likely to end only with life itself? There have been, and there are, any number of such in the world. You might take as a parable of their case the frozen bird that Becket found in the fields upon a winter's day.

“We came upon
A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still
I reach'd my hand and touched: she did not stir;
The snow had frozen round her, and she sat
Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold eggs.”

She sits there for a symbol of the many cold hearts and dead hopes there are in the world, of those who have had for their portion the discipline of waiting and little more!

Now there are riddles in this realm which no man can read: there are some things that must stand over until God Himself explains and vindicates His government of His world. But there are two things which may be said and can be said even with our present knowledge.

(a) The first is this—that while you are undergoing the discipline of waiting, you must not despise such *opportunities of working* as are yours already. It is quite possible to lose oneself in

dreams of a bigger inheritance, and to neglect the cultivation of the inheritance one has. There have been young men who have dreamed of a pulpit while they have been too lazy to work for their Sunday School class. There have been people who have dreamed of regenerating the world, and who at the same time have not ruled well their own house. There have been reformers who have longed for a life of knight-errantry, "to ride abroad redressing human wrongs," but they have scarcely had a kind word for their own neighbours or servants. There have been people who have longed and prayed to be rulers over many things—and they have almost lost their faith because it was denied them—yet have not been faithful over the few things that were already lying in their hands. It may be that God will deny us long some opportunity on which we have set our hearts : He may cause us to wait for it till our hair is grey, and our flaming desire is a heap of ashes. But do not let us despise the smaller opportunities He gives us to-day or to-morrow. Let us enter into these. Let us be faithful to these. And it may be that while we attend to these, the doorway to something greater will open before us—the doorway to fields that are richer and fairer and more spacious by far. If it does open, we shall be ready to enter it. If

it does not, good and well, for even without it we are doing our Lord's will.

(b) There is, however, a second thing to be said. It is this—that in so far as the discipline of waiting is real, it is meant of God *to be a school*—a stern school perhaps, but a school, and a school of the loftiest instruction, the noblest virtue. We started with the men and women who were waiting for the consolation of *Israel*. God sought to train that whole people in the attitude and spirit of expectancy. But that did not mean that they had nothing to learn then and there, as each generation went past ; all their fortune was not in the future : even as they were and where they were, there were psalms to be sung, and lessons to be learned, and sacrifices to be offered. And however real and protracted the discipline of waiting may be for any of us, our fortune is not all in the future ; we too are at school : let us use the time, for soon our school-days will be done.

The school is a *school of patience*. And herein lies the first part of the grace that is hid behind the severity of God. “ How poor are they that have not patience ! ” and how can we acquire patience, if our patience is never put to the test ? Waiting, waiting for consolation, waiting for light and certainty, waiting for harvest, waiting for the Kingdom, waiting for larger opportunity

and fuller life—that is how God teaches and trains us in the grace of patience. It is a grace we need in this feverish and fretful age. We fret and fume because there are hindrances and delays between us and the aims that call and beckon us. Yet perhaps ours is the better heritage if we learn the grace of patience, if we school ourselves to take God's way and God's time. One day when Luther was ill, they brought him proofsheets. "God has touched me sorely," he said; "I have been impatient, but God knows better than I do whereto it serves. Our Lord God is like a printer who sets the letters backwards, so that here we cannot read them. When we are printed off we shall read all clearly and straightforward. Meanwhile we must have patience."

The school of waiting is a school for perhaps an even more fundamental grace than the grace of patience: it is a school for *faith*. Herein lies faith's chief test and training. Did we have all we wanted at the moment we wanted it, there would be no place for faith in our full-fed hearts: faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, the things that lie up above, the things that wait on before. Where shall Faith prove itself unless in obedience to such a word as this?—"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." If we do not trust God's

Providence, how shall we trust His Grace ? If we do not trust Him for to-morrow and the day after, how shall we trust Him for eternity ? If we do not suffer Him to take His own time and work His own will, wherein do we trust Him at all ? So then if God calls you to wait—I care not for what blessing, temporal or spiritual—you are at school to learn faith : perhaps you are in the only school where you can learn a faith of the *heroic* order—strong, determined, and able to stand amid the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds.

And finally the school of waiting is a school for *immortality*. I do not believe in fleeing too much to the thought of another life amid the storms and conflicts of our earthly day. After all, it is here we have to live our life and fight our battle : let us brace ourselves to the task like men ! Yet there are cases where little else is left save this : what is life if you take this away ? There are souls who have waited long and achieved but little. Victory has never come to them. Harvests have never grown for them. Opportunity has shut its doors against them. Life has been disappointment heaped on disappointment. What remains ? *One* thing, and thank God for it, for it is a *great* thing ! There is a poet who has written three short verses for those who, humanly speaking, have failed in this world—the people

who have waited but have not been able to do much more. Most poets have twined their garlands and sung their songs for the conquerors: here is one who lays one little bunch of violets on the grave of the defeated.

“ Yes, I have failed ; that golden prize
Of life, success, ambition’s boast,
Which dazzled once my boyish eyes,
I strove for, prayed for, and have lost.

Yet I may not have lost the prize—
It only may not yet be won ;
I see with dim and tearful eyes
The goal may be still farther on.

That star again, like morning sun,
May rise upon some happier shore,
And where a nobler race is run,
My Master bid me try once more.” ¹

Perhaps it is worth while even to undergo the discipline of waiting to be flung back upon a hope like that. Hold out, then, faith and patience !—until hearts that have waited long are consoled and satisfied for ever.

¹ Samuel Greig, *A Layman’s Legacy*.

VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN OPINION

“What think ye of the Christ?”—ST. MATT. xxii. 42.

OUR Lord was here carrying war into the enemy's camp. Time after time He had been interrogated as to His own opinions,—His opinion on tribute to Caesar, His opinion on the resurrection life, His opinion on the greatest commandment: and most if not all of these questions had been traps for His feet, devices cunningly prepared in the hope that by expressing His opinions He might either bring Himself under the displeasure of the authorities or destroy His popularity with the multitude. It was time for Him to take the aggressive—time that He should turn the tables and catechize men in regard to their opinions—not to entrap them, but to instruct them. “What think ye,” He said, “of the Christ? What opinions have you about Him?” The Christ was a person foreshadowed in psalm and prophecy, alive in popular expectation, often discussed in theory and argument: what opinion had they come to with regard to the Christ?

What sort of Christ did they expect to see? He received the answer He expected: "the Son of David." It was the orthodox answer: it was an external answer—important enough in its own place, yet only a small part of the greater whole: it was of a piece with the externalism which too much governed the people's thoughts and made them expect a political Messiah and the re-establishment of the independence of the Judean kingdom. Jesus turned their thoughts to a new line of movement: what if He be not merely David's Son but David's Lord? What if, on the testimony of Scriptures which you yourselves revere, He exercise an authority higher than that of mere royal descent—the divine and worshipful authority over the conscience and the spirit? Had they cared to follow out that line of investigation for themselves, they might have made some new discoveries and found reason to revise and adjust their opinions.

The point to be considered now is *the importance of an opinion*. Sometimes, I think, one feels that importance as contrasted with the comparative unimportance of the spoken word. Two men may hold essentially the same opinion—true and rich and deep—on some subject, but they may express their opinion in very different ways: the opinion is the thing; the spoken

word is only the clothing of the thing. Or again, two men may speak the same word, but behind the word may lie very different thoughts, opinions or conceptions: again the thought is the thing; the word is but the mask which makes two things essentially different seem alike on the surface. Take as an illustration the greatest and deepest of all words—the name of God. That word ought to correspond to the greatest, the noblest, the loveliest of all conceptions: it has not always been so: even while great souls were using the great word in a great way, little souls beside them have used the great word in a little way—the light in it has been as darkness. Winstanley, a mystic of the days of the Commonwealth, said that in his time many people were “held in darkness” by the name of God. He himself had been held in darkness by it. So he deliberately changed his name for the Supreme Being—changed it from God to *Reason*. “The word Reason is not the alone name of that spirituall power; but every one may give him a name according to that spirituall Power that they feel and see rules in them . . . Therefore some may call Him King of Righteousnesse and Prince of peace; some may call him Love, and the like; but I can, and I doe, call him Reason; because I see him to be that living powerful light that is in righteousness,

making righteousness to be righteousness, or justice to be justice, or love to be love." I think one can see his meaning. Winstanley spoke of God : other men around him spoke of God. But the deities were different. The God of some was the God of a lurid theology, fierce and implacable. The God of others was the God of a Church, narrow and exclusive. Winstanley called his God the Supreme Reason, because He was a light in all things and had a sweet reasonableness in all His works and ways. The opinion, the conception, matters more than the word in which it is expressed. What think ye of God ? If your thought is right, you can almost allow the expression of the thought to take care of itself. " What think ye of Christ ? " Jesus said to the men of His own day. Many people spoke of the Christ : yet the name after all mattered little ; different people could use the same name in different senses ; the important thing, the thing that mattered, was the opinion behind the name. Were they looking for a mere descendant of David who should wear the royal purple and break the Roman power ? or had they caught any glimpse of a Lordship loftier than David's ; a King who should reign as God reigns, by authority over heart and conscience ? Between two men who spoke of the Christ so much difference as this might lie.

1. I repeat, then, that my subject now is the importance of an opinion. And perhaps I had better begin with *the dignity of having an opinion*—the dignity of being allowed to have opinions. Think of it!—just because we are men and women it is ordained that each of us shall be in ourselves a perpetual judge and jury, and life resolves itself into an endless procession of people and things moving before us in order that we may pass judgment upon them, in order that we may form an opinion about them. Have you ever looked at a statue in a crowded thoroughfare and wondered what it was thinking of the stream that flowed past it? Here is King Charles at the top of Whitehall: what does he think of it all—the Kings that have succeeded him, who seem able to keep on such marvellously good terms with all classes of their subjects; and the statesmen of to-day, at their fiercest somewhat milder than Oliver Cromwell; and the public meetings that are held within earshot under the beneficent protection of a tolerant police; and all the other changing aspects of changeless human nature? Here is the Sphinx on the edge of the desert, watching the stream of tourists that washes the base of the Great Pyramid: what does she think of it all? Has she any sense of humour? Is there ever any throb of pity in her heart of stone? Does she

think the modern European or American so immeasurably superior to the ancient Egyptian as he imagines himself to be ? But the Sphinx is very silent : it is easier to read the heart of King Charles in Whitehall than to read the thoughts of the Sphinx in the desert. So one questions and wonders, then abruptly recalls oneself to reality. These things are statues and cannot form opinions : that prerogative is reserved for living men : it is oneself, one's own powers of thought and feeling and imagination, that one is reading into the statue of iron or stone. It is you yourself who live on a pedestal, and all persons and things pass before you for judgment. The mere fact of this is itself a dignity. And if you have really trained and exercised yourself to take life seriously and to form a careful and considered judgment in regard to its more important matters, that is a greater dignity still : there is a sense, Lord Morley says in the essay on *Compromise*, in which taking thought does add a cubit to our stature.

2. But now I pass to the need of *watching* our opinions, and of watching them on two sides—on the side of their sources and on the side of their fruits.

(a) Our opinions need watching *on the side of their sources*. How do our opinions come to us ? I suppose some of them come to us along the line of

family or social tradition : they are the product of the past. Others again are more the product of environment : they are borne to us on the wings of the wind ; they are afloat in the air we breathe ; they come to us, perhaps too often, wrapped up in our morning newspapers. Some of them, let us hope—not all of course, for we cannot be experts and investigators in everything—some of them are dug out of the earth with the spade of our personal inquiry and knocked into shape by the hammer of our own logic, and tested with the touchstone of our own experience. Others again are somewhat affected by our tastes, affections and desires ; there are more of these than we imagine, the wish, according to the familiar saying, being father to the thought. Putting it all together, I suppose Oliver Wendell Holmes is right when he says : “ A man’s opinions are generally of much more value than his arguments. These last are made by his brain . . . but opinions are formed by his whole nature, brain, heart, instinct, brute life, everything all our experience has shaped for us by contact with the whole circle of our being.”

Now it is just on this account that our opinions so much need watching on the side of their sources : our whole selves go to the making of them, and so if there is any bad strain in us it may have its

effect upon our opinions: the larger and the stronger that bad strain may be the likelier it is to affect our opinions as to the highest things of all. Let me take an illustration that may seem a little extreme; but sometimes a tendency may be seen clearly in an extreme case. Suppose that there were two children born in Palestine about the time of the birth of Jesus. Suppose that one of them was trained from the first to obey conscience, to love the pure, the gentle and the true, to do the right even at the cost of great self-sacrifice. Suppose that the other was allowed from the first to take his own way, to count conscience as unworthy of attention, to seek only the pleasure of the moment and the gain of self, to do nothing that involved trouble or self-sacrifice. Now imagine these two, grown to be men with their wills unchanged, confronting Jesus of Nazareth and making up their minds about Him. Do you not think that the first of the two, with his insight into goodness quickened by his repeated choice of goodness, would be naturally the more likely to give high rank to Jesus and to form an adequate conception of Him? While you would not be surprised if the second had joined the company of those who said, "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." We know from our Lord Himself that there were some in His day whose repeated choice

of evil had blinded their moral vision, so that they called evil good and good evil, and the light that was in them had become as darkness. That is an extreme but perfectly possible instance of the way in which character may make opinion: a man follows a certain line of conduct, and his conduct subtly but really shapes his creed.¹ Of course I do not mean to imply that evil in the life is the only source of darkness in the mind. Neither do I forget that many who had wandered far from purity and dignity were recalled by the voice of Christ, and appreciated Him more than some whose lives had been cleaner and colder. Yet it is suggestive that when our Lord was deliberately choosing His first disciples, those whose minds were to be the immediate mirrors for the reflection of His message, He did not go to repentant prodigals but to the circle touched by the Baptist's stern appeal: spiritual genealogies here run back into the Simeon and Anna type—the element in the life of Israel that still kept alive a quick and eager aspiration. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see”—God and many of the things that are best worth seeing! So let us take heed to the sources of our opinions, and especially take heed to ourselves.

¹ Cf. Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 168.

(b) Now our opinions also want watching on another side—not only on the side of their roots, but also on that of their *fruits*; not only on the side of their sources, but also on that of their outflow. Our opinions can scarcely help having an outflow into our life. We sometimes speak of the divorce between creed and conduct; one understands the meaning of the phrase, yet there is a sense in which we may ask whether there really can be such a thing. If there be such a divorce, does it not prove that there are other ends and interests in which a man believes more passionately than he believes in his creed, and it is these things that are his real creed? His so-called creed may be a nominal creed, but his real opinions are his real guides. Opinions are powerful, because opinions shape ideals. The two are in such close contact that it is hard to draw a hard and fast line between opinion and ideal and tell where the one stops and the other begins; “this I think” tends to blend with “this I do.” Your political opinions affect your practical relation to the great parties in the State. Your opinions about floral worth and beauty will not be inoperative if you have a garden: they will sow certain kinds of seed in your flower-beds, and will work the trowel that digs some others up and move the barrow that carries them away. Your opinions about Christ

—I mean your real opinions—are bound to have some reflection in the most practical part of your life. “What think ye of Christ?” Jesus said to his opponents, speaking of the dream-figure that moved so majestically and alluringly through the pages of the prophets and the expectations of the people. Yet He knew Himself to be that dream-figure turned into reality, and His whole ministry was a request for an answer to the question—What did they think of *Him*. I know what some thought of Him: they called Him a gluttonous man and a winebibber, and worse names still; and in proportion as they thought these things there was less and less likelihood of their lives ever changing to be something better than they were. But there were some who thought of Him as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, and that thought made their lives lovely too. They went to prison and to death for Him. They went to labour and to toil for Him. They set themselves to a heroic fight against custom and convention in order to belong to Him. And behind all their practical service and devotion there lay this creative fact—an adequate thought of Jesus, a thought which the whole man, intellect, conscience, affections, had helped to form, and which in its turn reacted upon the whole man, mind and heart and will. Watch well your

opinions on the side of their outflow as on the side of their source, and cherish well those that help and lead you towards the high, the heroic, and the divine.

3. And so I come to my last point, the *solemnity* of having an opinion. I began with the dignity of it, for we are called to be judges. I close with the solemnity, for in judging we ourselves are judged. Suppose I hear that you claim to be an art critic, and I set you before one of the world's masterpieces. What do you think of it? Now take care how you answer. Silence might be wiser than speech. As you form your opinion about it you yourself are on trial: the picture has lived through the generations and will live after you are gone: it is not the glory of the masterpiece, it is the reputation of the critic that is likely to be extinguished if he comes to an adverse conclusion.

So the Fairest of all Beauty moves before us and demands our verdict: it cannot help being mercy and judgment in one. Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the Son of God, presents Himself to our gaze: He asks what we think of Him. Shall we pass Him by with a careless glance as one who matters little to the world and less to us? Or shall we openly and frankly oppose Him, counting His goodness evil, and our evil good? Or shall

we call Him—*Master*? It is well to decide upon our knees how we shall answer. We may think we are judging Him. We are really judging ourselves.

VIII

THE ROMANCE OF TWO WILLS

"Wilt thou be made whole?"—ST. JOHN v. 6.

"The Son quickeneth whom He will."—ST. JOHN v. 21.

THE romance of this story of Bethesda lies in the meeting of two wills—the will of the Son of Man who "quickeneth whom He will," and the will of the impotent man, who has only this germ of potency left within his paralysed being that he is willing to be made whole. The power of the will is indeed a wonderful and romantic thing. A good deal of attention has been attracted to it of late, partly perhaps as a revolt against the scientific fatalism which has been dominant for a considerable period, partly because recent psychological research has been throwing fresh light upon the reality and the marvellous powers of will. We have learned about telepathy—the curious power of one mind to work upon another mind and one will upon another will. And our students both of mind and of matter, working about that difficult borderland where mind and

matter meet, have been coining new words that as yet are unfamiliar but may yet be very well known even to the common ear,—words such as *telergy* and *telekinesis*, expressing the power of the human mind and will to act really, and to act at a distance, and to act without intermediate physical means or mechanical appliances. We are gravely told by responsible thinkers that telepathy is proved—the direct action of one mind and will upon another mind and will,—and indeed about that there can be little doubt. We are also told that telergy is almost proved—the possibility of one person's mind and will acting upon another person's body. Long ago, in mediaeval times, there was a superstition to this effect, that if you wanted your enemy to pine away, you should make a wax effigy of him and stick pins into it. Probably there is no superstition without some gleam of reason in the depths of its madness; and we are beginning to learn now that even in such a mad superstition as that there may have been a fraction of a grain of truth. For if you get a will or a combination of wills sufficiently strong, and sufficiently concentrated upon another person's life, you may help that person even physically—say towards recovery from illness: conversely, if you could get wills cruel and malicious enough so to act, they might equally damage or hinder.

Telekinesis takes us a step farther : it is the action of the personal will even upon dead matter. They tell us that is not yet proved, but that there are finger-posts pointing to it, and that it may yet be proved. But the times are hardly ripe for dogmatism along those lines, and I certainly do not dogmatize. I only mention these things as an illustration of what I have stated—that at present there is an extraordinary focussing of interest, thought and inquiry upon the will and its powers, and vast piles of evidence on the subject are being rapidly accumulated. It is specially welcome after a long period in which the tendency of thought was to deny the reality, the freedom and the power of the will, whether as a factor in the life of God or in the life of man.

1. Now notice for a little the meeting of these two wills by the pool of Bethesda. And I shall speak first of *the will of Christ the Saviour*. For in His own reflections upon this incident of Bethesda, amid the controversy which immediately followed, I find these words : “ The Son of Man quickeneth whom He will.” There is a fine note of royalty about the phrase. Royalty—not arbitrariness, as we shall see in a moment—a glorious and defiant assertion of His own independence of human restraint in working out the works of His Father. He refuses to be trammelled in His

working by the prejudices of the Jews: "the Son of Man quickeneth *whom* He will"—yes, and *when* He will. Indeed, He also refuses to be trammelled even by the likelihoods of circumstance, or the heavy fetters of human despair; He glories in an unlikely case, and triumphs over it in the fullness of Divine energy; He heals a man who has been thirty-eight years in his infirmity, and thrusts him like an emblem of hope before the eyes of despairing humanity: "the Son of Man quickeneth whom *He will*." Now think yourself back for a moment into those shadowed porches by the pool, crowded with sick and weary folk, waiting for their chance. Christ comes into the midst of them and His will begins to work. First, it works like a searchlight. You have seen the searchlight of a warship flashing round a horizon on a dark night, revealing the ships at sea, the fortifications on shore, the people on the beach, huts, houses, palaces, with its moving, momentary gleam, so swift and so revealing. So I see Christ's will moving round that dismal company, revealing, considering, deciding. Then His will comes to rest upon a certain man: it resolves itself from a searchlight into an electric energy: it directs itself upon him in the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" So the two wills meet: the man has his chance:

if there is will in him to respond to redeeming Will, nothing is impossible.

Is it possible to gain any insight into the principles on which the will of the Saviour wrought by the pool? It is not like Him to be arbitrary: even when He is most royal, He is not arbitrary: there is a sweet reasonableness about Him, which we expect to find here because we find it so continually. The impotent were all round Him that day: why did He choose one over against the rest? I dare not be dogmatic about it, but I hazard a guess, which I think is not out of harmony with the mind of Christ. This man was chosen because He was the neediest, because he was the most friendless, because he was the most helpless. There is a poetess who thinking out with herself a reasonable doctrine of Election, sings—

“Need shall my witness be
That I am loved of Thee . . .
Nor will Thy soul reject
Him whom Thou dost elect
To be Thine own through weakness, search, and need.”

This man might have taken these words into his lips. The Friend of the friendless found him out because he was friendless: the good Physician came straight to him because he was most in need. The fact is that in this scene by the pool of Beth-

esda we are watching the inauguration of a new era, dawning at last upon a world that has been waiting for it long. As Dr. Matheson puts it, the law hitherto has been the survival of the fittest : that law still holds in the porches of Bethesda : see how the strong hold back the weak at the critical moment, and how those who have friends to help them push aside those who have none. Here comes One into the midst, of whom you might almost say that the law of His Kingdom is the survival of the unfittest, the survival of the unlikeliest—One who allows the lame to take the prey, and who gives the Kingdom to the sinful, the weak, the poor and the helpless. Welcome this glorious election ! We may be willing to be counted among the poor and needy, if so be that, because of our poverty and need, He thinketh upon us.

But whether we can always see the principle on which it works or not, that Sovereign Will, imperious and divine, is still working among us. We know it, as this man came to know it, because some blessings came to us that were not of our bringing : perhaps some things came to us that were not even of our asking, and not at all of our deserving. I know that men have sometimes expressed the doctrine of God's overruling and predestinating Sovereignty in far too hard and

mechanical a way, as though He had drawn up unalterable lists of those who were to be taken and those who were to be passed by. We have now got away from such conceptions. But you cannot get away from the sovereign Will of God and its interference with life, any more than the man at the pool could get away from the royal Will of Christ and its interference with his seemingly hopeless condition. Our birthplace was chosen for us, not chosen by us. The family into which we were born was chosen for us, not chosen by us. Our physical constitution and the endowment of mental talent and capacity with which we started life were chosen for us, and not chosen by us. In the hours of our carelessness and rebellion messages from God have knocked at our door and compelled us to listen: they were sent to us: they were not sent for by us. Think of all that these things mean as evidence for an imperial Will, higher and greater than our own. Impossible it may seem to reconcile a world ruled by Almighty Will with a world in which there is room for finite choice. But sometimes we have to accept conflicting opposites and leave their reconciliation to the day when we have a larger light. How can you reconcile the two ideas of pressure and tension in any solid body? Physicists tell us that in any solid body such as a block of wood every

particle of matter attracts every other and yet at the same time repels it. We cannot think to ourselves the going-out of these two forces from the same atom at the same moment in the same direction—force of attraction and force of repulsion: it is unthinkable; yet though it is unthinkable it is true. And in the same way it may be impossible for us intellectually to reconcile the sovereign Will of God with the free will of man, yet both alike may be realities. The point where the practical issue emerges is this—that however many be the points of life at which God says to us “I will,” there are some points at least where He says “Wilt thou?” There are some points where it is His will to say “Wilt thou?” However many things are arranged *for* us, there are some at least arranged *by* us. If it be true that there is a Divinity that shapes our ends, it is equally true that there is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. Christ chooses to draw near to this needy man—chooses him because of his very need. He is impotent, this disappointed soul. Yet there is one potency left in him—his will. Christ appeals to that. “Wilt thou?” He says. And because it is still His will to appeal to our wills, may our eyes and ears be open to understand His appeal, and to seize our chance when it comes! Perhaps

had the man *not* been willing, not even the imperial will of Christ could have healed him. But in the meeting and consenting of these two wills, the will of the Redeemer and the will to be redeemed, lies the secret of a new birth and of a life redeemed from destruction.

2. So now I turn for a moment to *the other will*, which might seem a comparatively weak and small factor in the case, but upon which really hung the last issue of that fateful hour. "*Wilt thou?*" The help of God had come near: the man had his chance: it lay with him to seize it and to use it. Even if his will had been wearied into sleep by the disappointments of many years, until all life's energy had disappeared, it was awakened by the approach of the Will of Christ and by His startling question. The potency even of the impotent was invited to consent to the working of Almighty Love. By its consent it was invited to co-operate. Those who work in the slums of great cities, where the devil's castaways are found among the rubbish-heaps of life, sometimes find that their initial task with a human life is to awaken hope: if that can be done, everything is done: if that cannot be done, nothing is accomplished. Can you imagine the rekindling in this man's eyes of the light that had faded for many days? Desire this long time had been a bitter

pain, because unsatisfied. Desire, as by a magician's touch, was now transformed into joy, for hope once more was mixed with it, and the man's will was caught in the grasp of Christ's Will, to find that it was a good will, full of power and promise. And his consenting will was the point at which the electric energy of that greater Will touched him and entered into his life : he arose, took up his bed and walked : the sad porches of Bethesda knew him no more.

There is a lesson here for *the threshold of the life divine*. Willingness is that threshold. There is no other. Nothing can take its place. There are ways and means by which the appeal of Christ's Sovereign Will still knocks at our door. It may be in a sermon. It may be in some sudden and silent thought when we are alone and the doors are shut upon our fellow-men. It may be in some solemn event of Providence, or in some sharp reminders of the flight of time. But it says to us, " Wilt thou ? " as truly as if that message had been spoken to us in the syllables of articulate speech or written on the sky in living flame. However it comes, it is our chance. However much our life may seem to be hemmed in by fate, heredity, environment, habit, our will has this golden moment for its own. Do not let us allow ourselves to be deceived about this. It is easy to persuade our-

selves that our wills are weaker than they are. We must prove the reality of our own wills by exerting through them our nobler selves. Speaking of the modern tendency to regard crime as merely a disease, Mr. Chesterton says:¹ "The fallacy of the whole thing is that evil is a matter of active choice, whereas disease is not. If you say that you are going to cure a profligate as you cure an asthmatic, my cheap and obvious answer is, Produce the people who want to be asthmatics as many people want to be profligates. A man may lie still and be cured of a malady. But he must not lie still if he wants to be cured of a sin." *He must not lie still.* He must at least be active and alert enough to answer "I will" to the Divine "Wilt thou?" The very study of this romance of two wills may be God's method of saying "Wilt thou?" to some of us. There was a man once who could not get so far as to say "I am willing." His proud head would not bow to that low level. But he said, "Lord, I am willing to be made willing." Even if you could only get as far as that, it might be the gateway of healing and joy.

But the lesson of the threshold is also a lesson of *perpetual obligation*. Christ's Will is mighty: how mighty this man found when the healing poured into him; how mighty perhaps we have found

¹ *Orthodoxy*, p. 252.

in glad experience of cleansing and renewal. But we are not meant to make that might a temporary refuge. Our wills are weak. Our impotence returns upon us. The world and our habits are strong. We need to keep close to Christ's sovereign and conquering Will all along the way. Again and again we need to re-unite our wills with His, that His may be to us not only guidance but power.

"Renew my will from day to day :
Blend it with Thine."

And He whose Will was energy to the impotent long ago, will answer our self-surrender by enduing us with somewhat of His own great strength. To submit to Him is not overthrow but victory. To keep His Will enthroned over ours is not bondage, but health and liberty. And in union with Him, we too leave the darksome porches of Bethesda and turn our faces towards the hills of God, where potency grows by climbing, and where on the far summits health and happiness wait for us without limit and without end.

IX

A STUDY IN WASTE

"To what purpose is this waste?"—ST. MATT. xxvi. 8.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."—ST. JOHN vi. 12.

"The son of perdition."—ST. JOHN xvii. 12.

THERE is one Greek word in all these phrases. Let me retranslate them so as to bring this out. "To what purpose is this *waste*?" asked the grudging disciples the night of the alabaster box. "Gather up the fragments—the broken portions—which remain, that nothing be *wasted*," said the careful Master after the feeding of the multitude. And then the same word occurs in this strange, sad name that hangs over the record of Judas like a cloud over the setting sun—"The son of *waste*," you might render it. Putting them together, there is before us a study in waste—a glimpse of what men count waste, a glimpse of what Christ counts waste, a glimpse of the waste that is not waste at all because it is love's offering yielded up, a glimpse of the hoarding that is the

worst of all possible wasting—the life which saving itself destroys itself, which if it had been surrendered might have been saved.

The subject is an important one. There is a suggestive sentence in one of Sir Leslie Stephen's essays: "All moral teaching, I have sometimes fancied, might be summed up in the one formula, *Waste not.*" And he goes on to explain himself thus: "Every element of which our nature is composed may be said to be good in its proper place; and therefore every vicious habit springs out of the misapplication of forces which might be turned to account by judicious training." That is a true saying, and very close to life: all moral teaching might be summed up in the formula, *Waste not.* Lust is love run to waste—pouring itself into the wrong channels; and frivolity is man's natural and reasonable love of joy run to waste—neglecting the bounds of moderation and the call of the higher satisfactions; and gluttony and drunkenness are two of man's most normal appetites run to waste, until the whole man is coarsened and darkened by their untrained and undisciplined wildness. But if it be true that all moral teaching is summed up in the phrase *Waste not*, it is also true that all religious teaching is summed up in the same wise formula. There is always waste if anything is not put

to the end for which it was brought into being. Labour has been wasted for the lack of right guidance. Material has been wasted for the lack of right cutting, fitting and planning. Human lives have been wasted because "some one had blundered," and had led them towards the precipice rather than towards the goal. Thomas Chalmers had a phrase he used very often in his letters and speeches—the *terminus ad quem*—the end you want to reach. Alike in the affairs of Church and State he was continually asking people to think out the *terminus ad quem*—to be sure of what they were aiming at, that they might not miss it by taking the wrong turning and so waste their labour and their toil. Religion bids men remember the *terminus ad quem* of human life, lest human life be wasted in desert pathways that lead to no promised land. "What is man's chief end? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." Life that misses its true end is very largely wasted; and if it be hoarded with scrupulous care, selfishly hoarded, jealously self-contained, never uttered in aspiration or spent in service, then it is wasted all the more. And the epitaph of Judas is its grim memorial.

Let us look into this matter with these texts for signs and fingerposts.

1. I begin with the wise economy of the

Master after the feeding of the multitude—"Gather up the broken portions which remain that nothing be wasted." There was common sense in that, and homely wisdom. Dr. George Macdonald works out a beautiful and suggestive thought in his book on the Miracles of Jesus—that our Lord did quickly and on a small scale, when He was in this world, the works that His Father did continually, but slowly and on a large scale. Certainly there is a close resemblance between the feeding of the multitude and the works and ways of God in Nature. In one aspect of her working Nature is prodigal in her beneficence : she does not measure with a careful balance the leaves she lavishes upon the trees, nor grudge the fine work she puts upon out-of-the-way corners of her territories where no eye is likely to light upon them. There is abundance. There is overflow. There is prodigality even to a seeming carelessness. And when Christ fed the multitude His working was like that : there were broken fragments left over, twelve baskets full : there was no over-nice calculation of quantity, but an abundance like the abundance of the earth, a generosity like the generosity of the skies. Yet Nature in another aspect of her working can be grimly parsimonious. She has a law of economy. It is called the conservation of energy. And those who have watched

her most closely tell us that there is a sense in which she never wastes anything: energy may be transformed, as when motion is turned into heat, but it is conserved: what is not used in one form is gathered up into some one of Nature's many baskets of purpose to be transformed and used some other way. There is a hint of that watchful economy in the action of Christ: "gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be wasted." Again we admire the homely wisdom of it. We are told in the New Testament that even the Son of God learned obedience by the things which He suffered. If He learned obedience, He may have learned other things as well. Can it be that there is a reminiscence of Nazareth poverty, and of the watchfulness over detail which would be necessary in a poor carpenter's house, in this combination of economy with generosity, this watchfulness over the broken portions which remained? The principle, I think, runs through all the work and purpose of Jesus Christ—the thrift of God, the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven. The mother teaching her children not to waste their food: the prudent toiler laying up for a rainy day: the wise generosity which even out of slender resources sets a little aside to give to him that hath need—the shadow of Christ's example seems to fall across all

these things and sanctify them. Yet watch the Master carrying out the same principle on higher levels still, and enforcing it in regard to great, stupendous matters that touch eternity, "He that loseth his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall *save* it." "The Son of Man came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved*." Why saved? Because human life, even though it be sometimes broken and scattered on the ground, is too precious to be wasted. Gather it up. Carry it home. This also is the thrift of God, the wise economy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. There were times, however, when Christ encouraged what men called waste. The typical case is the story of the alabaster box. There were some who grudged that the gift should be given: one of the Gospels tells us that Judas was their spokesman—Judas who bare the bag and presumably thought of the cash value of all things. "To what purpose is this waste?" they said. They thought they had reason on their side, and humanity. "This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor." But their arguments did not cut so deeply as did the mind of Jesus. Does His word of response seem unsympathetic towards the poor? "Ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always."

If it seem unsympathetic in itself, set it in the light of all that Jesus, Himself with no place where to lay His head, did for the poor—feeding the poor, healing the poor, preaching the Gospel to the poor—though He was rich, for their sakes and ours becoming poor. Set it in the light of all that Jesus did for the poor of future generations by allowing this love and gratitude to find an utterance. Mary is the glad pioneer of all who bring the tribute of love to the Master's feet; the pioneer of all who now, the Master Himself being beyond sight and touch, deem this world's poor and needy to be His chosen representatives. "The poor," says a beautiful phrase in an early Christian document, "are the altar of God." They have received through the ages many an offering of love because Mary did not give that particular gift to the poor directly, but brought it in thankfulness to the Master's feet; for wherever the Gospel has been preached throughout the whole world, this that this woman did has been told for a memorial of her.

But the point is this, that love's offering is not waste: even if it seem to cold and critical eyes over-enthusiastic or unpractical, if it be indeed love's offering, it is not waste. The martyrs gave themselves to the sword and stake: they count it now, from the heavenly places, as

they counted it in the hour of their agony, well worth while. Countless numbers of His servants have laid at His feet untold toils, pains, self-denials, labours, conflicts : it has been richly worth while. In all these lesser gifts they have first and last given themselves, and it has always been worth while : it was the debt of gratitude ; it was the reasonable service of faith and love. He did not count it waste who received it, who saw in it the travail of His soul and was satisfied, and who knew that it was good for themselves thus to speak forth their faith and love. And they did not count it waste who gave it, and who knew that if they withheld it the stones would cry out against them. Love must utter itself, and its utterance is not waste but sacrifice—

“A trembling love that faints and fails
 Yet still is love of Thee,
 A wondering love that hopes and hails
 Thy boundless Love of me :
 Love kindling faith and pure desire,
 Love following on to bliss,
 A spark, O Jesu, from Thy fire,
 A drop from Thine abyss.”¹

3. I pass to my third text, and the strange name it gives to Judas Iscariot : “ *the Son of Waste.* ” It is a Hebrew idiom, of course : there is a phrase in Isaiah about “ children

¹ Christina Rossetti.

of transgression, a seed of falsehood." There is a phrase in 2nd Samuel about "a son of death," meaning a man who ought to die; our Lord spoke once about the proselyte whom the Pharisees made "a son of hell" worse than themselves. So here we have a "son of perdition," or translating the Greek word as in the two other cases, "a Son of Waste"—his character is his name. We have an expressive colloquialism for a good-for-nothing—the man who has missed his *terminus ad quem*, who fails to reach any worthy goal or to turn his life to any fruitful purpose: we call him a waster. That brings us very close to the meaning of this text. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I kept": the divine economy had been at work: these men had been taught to spend themselves, and so to save themselves from wicked and wasteful uses. "And none of them is wasted, but the son of waste"—the wasteful one! The irony of it that it should be Judas, Judas the man that bare the bag and kept what was put therein, Judas the man who had frowned on Mary's offering as mere waste, Judas who could not understand the self-abnegation of the Master and who was out of sympathy with the self-devotion of the other disciples. Judas in strong self-will had broken through the loving

guardianship that would have saved him for noble ends, and thinking to save himself out of the ruin of the fortunes of Jesus, found in the end of the matter that he had vilely cast himself away.

Now these children of waste are scattered all across history. The tragedy of their case has many ingredients. Sometimes it is a case of wasted *talents*, talents not used, improved, developed. "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew Thee that Thou art a hard man, and I was afraid, and went and hid Thy talent in the earth; lo, there Thou hast that is Thine." It sounds like economy—it is really waste, the act of a disloyal servant: had he used it, he would have multiplied it, and the Master would have received His own with usury. Or it may be *opportunity* wasted—opportunity neglected, postponed, trifled with. "Buying up the opportunity," St. Paul says in a certain deep word. We all go a-marketing through this world's market-place, and many voices of God-sent opportunity call to us on the right hand and on the left, Come buy, come buy. But sometimes we let the voices die away unheeded, we do not buy up our opportunities; we go on into a barren destiny, with our wasted opportunities behind us to mark our path. Or it may be *sorrow* wasted.

In the passage I quoted from Sir Leslie Stephen where he speaks of the counsel *Waste not* as the sum of all morality, he goes on to say "the waste of sorrow is one of the most lamentable forms of waste." It is not wasted if it produces resignation, if it works purification, if it enriches sympathy, if it draws us nearer to God: from some such storm-swept fields God reaps His richest harvests: it may be tragically wasted if it leaves a man hard and sour and narrow, unchastened, unsubdued. Or *joy* may be wasted, and the gifts of life and time, and the manifold blessings of the brighter side of experience: they are wasted if they do not make us thankful: they are at least partially wasted if they do not make us hopeful. It is a fine sight to see a man with his basket on his shoulder, going through his own experience and picking up the fragments of it, to cheer him for the journey and the conflict. "The Lord delivered me out of the paw of the lion," said David: that was one fragment thrown into the basket: "the Lord delivered me out of the paw of the bear"; there was another: "He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"—so past experience was not wasted: its energy was conserved, and transformed into present faith and hope. But the essence of the tragedy of waste is that *the self*, the life, the soul is so often wasted, because it is not

freely offered up to God, because it is not spent in the service of man and of God's Kingdom.

The old saying, then, is true in essence and in detail, "What I spent, I had ; what I kept, I lost ; what I gave, I have." And if, as to our giving, the cold world asks the question, " To what purpose is this waste ? " we shall answer that it is not waste but wisdom and joy. Ourselves and our all are given into His hand that they may be delivered from unprofitable uses. They are laid at His feet that they may not be lost, but gathered up in His infinite compassion, and made fruitful here with the blessing of the Almighty, and garnered hereafter where moth and rust do not corrupt nor thieves break through to steal.

X

THE PRAISE OF MEN

"I praise you."—I COR. xi. 2.

"I praise you not."—I COR. xi. 17.

I WISH to speak of the place of *praise* in human life—the uses of praise and the dangers of praise. And having that somewhat large topic before me, I do not propose to use these texts as more than finger-posts to start me upon the way. I will only say this in regard to them, that St. Paul was a man whose praise was to be coveted, and whose blame was to be dreaded, because God had given him the grace of a sound mind. There are some people who are so weakly genial that they go on applauding, alike when men do not, and when men do, deserve their applause. And there are some who are so habitually censorious that they go on finding fault, even when they ought to see that there is room and reason for praise. Paul was not guilty of either of these extremes; he knew when to wield the rod; he knew when to bestow the crown; and he knew the part played

by human praise in human life. "I praise you," he sometimes said, in one form or another; "I praise you not," he sometimes also said, and he could say it with considerable emphasis. He knew the encouragement of a wise word of praise, and the stinging challenge of a loving rebuke, and he used that power, like all his powers, as in his Master's sight.

1. The first thing to be noticed is that the love of praise is a *natural* thing—a natural and healthy instinct of the human mind. Some one has called the love of praise "the sixth sense," and it is certainly a sense that develops about as early as any of the rest. We all know how children love praise, and respond to a word of praise. It is *educative* in the literal meaning of that much-abused word; it draws them out, and encourages timid little souls to emerge from the shell of their natural shyness. There is no reason to doubt that the instinct is on the whole healthy as well as natural. While we are intended to seek the praise of God supremely, we are not so constituted that we can, in ordinary circumstances, be content with the praise of God alone. It is healthy to desire the esteem of our fellow-men—or at any rate, as we grow older and wiser, to desire the esteem of the best among our fellow-men. Indeed, if a man too

ostentatiously scorns the good opinion of his fellows, we are a little inclined to suspect his sincerity—to judge that he has fallen into the sin that Augustine warns us against when he bids us beware of glorying in the mere contempt of vain-glory. And often it must mean much to us that those whose opinion is worth having should be able to say “I praise you,” while it will darken our sky most really if they are compelled to say “I praise you not.”

2. Now this instinct for praise, like all the other desires and capacities of our human nature, is liable to faulty development. And faulty development is usually one-sided development: we may err either by repression or by excess.

(a) On the one hand we may too much *repress* this instinct for human praise; it is quite possible to care too little what others think of us, and so to fall into many snares—a foolish eccentricity of manners, a rough fanaticism of religion, a rampant individualism which refuses to see any standpoint save its own, and tramples rough-shod upon public opinion. We teach our children that it is a wise thing for them to look at themselves sometimes in the mirror of other people's eyes; and it is possible for grown men and women to use that mirror too seldom, to the great detriment of their personal appearance. In one of the letters of Charles Kings-

ley there is a very fine passage dealing with this whole matter of human praise. With reference to this side of it, he says : " There has been gradually revealed to me (what my many readings in the lives of fanatics and ascetics ought to have taught me long before) that there is a terrible gulf ahead of that ' not caring what men say.' Of course it is a feeling on which the spirit must fall back in hours of need, and cry ' Thou God knowest mine integrity. I have believed and therefore I will speak ; Thou art true, though all men be liars ! ' But I am convinced that this is a frame in which no man can live, or is meant to live ; that it is only to be resorted to in fear and trembling, after deepest self-examination and self-purification and earnest prayer. For otherwise a man gets to forget that voice of God *without him*, in his determination to listen to nothing but the voice of God *within*." These are wise words. There is a voice of God without us as well as within us. It speaks in the instincts of good men, in the reasonable order of Society, in the corporate life of the Church, in the praise of those whose praise is best worth having, and in the blame of those whose blame is censure indeed. And we throw away one of our safeguards and inspirations if we throw away, or at any rate refuse to consider, the praise and the blame of men.

(b) But perhaps the temptation of most of us is towards the other extreme—of setting *too much store* by the praise of men, of living for that and for that only. That has been all along one of the besetting temptations of humanity. Our Lord was surrounded by people so tempted, who had yielded to that temptation. “How can ye believe?” He asked, “ye who seek the honour that cometh from men, and not the honour that cometh from God.” They could not endure an unpopular Christ. And again, “They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”: it was their folly and their doom that the praise of men was the be-all and the end-all of their living. It is not wrong to seek the praise of men, if it be the praise of men whom one’s conscience can respect; yet, if the praise of men and the praise of God come into conflict, the praise of God must be our supreme desire. It is sometimes a hard struggle—men are so near, God seems so far away; men can be so vocal, God seems so silent; and the dilemma becomes one of our sharpest temptations. Every kind and type of human being is fond of praise. Faber has a delightful passage¹ in which he describes the effect of praise upon different types of character, and I do not think he exaggerates. He describes the grave and pompous man smoothing

¹ *Spiritual Conferences*, p. 162.

himself down under the breath of praise, like the swell of a summer sea when the south wind blows. He describes the cold man thawing, and the dignified man becoming playful, under the same influence. He goes on to say that the silent man is the greatest lover of praise : he chews self like a cud, and does not find it bitter. It is interesting, and at times amusing, to notice how this temptation enters into the experience of the saints, and frankly reveals itself in their confessions. Bunyan tells us in *Grace Abounding* how, when he turned from profaneness to live a moral life, his neighbours began to praise him. " It pleased me mighty well," he frankly says. " For though, as yet, I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly. I was proud of my godliness, and indeed I did all I did either to be seen of, or to be well spoken of, by men." If you remind me that this was before John Bunyan's real conversion, I will give you the case of Augustine, who, even after his conversion, found that the love of praise was one of his abiding snares and pitfalls. There are some most searching, because self-revealing, chapters in the *Confessions* upon the love of praise and the snare it spreads, even for the feet of God's saints. " Can it ever cease throughout this whole life ? " Augustine cries, " this wish to be loved and feared by men ! "

And again, "Our daily furnace is the tongues of men"—the men obviously, who heaped upon him the blame he did not want and withheld from him the praise he coveted. And so to Augustine, as to all of us, it meant a great deal whether men said to him "I praise you" or "I praise you not"; he himself was conscious that it meant too much, and therefore represented an actual peril. It was in this connexion that he prayed his famous prayer, "Give what Thou commandest and then command what Thou wilt"—so impossible did he find it to conquer this temptation without the strength of God.

It is easy to see how this tendency, indulged too far, may cause a character to deteriorate, and bring a life to moral and spiritual shipwreck. If we make too much of human praise, then we shall also make too much of the absence of human praise, and we shall develop the unpleasant quality of sulkiness, the spirit that obviously works for recognition, and becomes sore and angry when the recognition is withheld. Indeed we may very easily go farther. One of the dangers involved in loving the praise of men is a warping of the moral standard; right and wrong begin to lose their absolute character; the right thing is the thing that is applauded; the wrong thing is the thing that is not praised; and the only dis-

grace is to be found out in a fault. Nay! the mistake may go farther still. We may not only warp the moral standard; we may invert the universe, and put man in the place of God, like the Pharisees, who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. The man who does that dwarfs himself to the level of the god he worships. And he risks more than is worth risking, for the praise of men is fickle as the wind and may not come to him in the hour when he needs it most, even though he has sold his God in order to obtain it. That was the case of Hastings in *King Richard III*—a man who did all things for the praise of men, and who, when he looked for golden honours, found only cruel swords awaiting him.

“O momentary grace of mortal men,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
Who builds his hope in air of your fair looks,
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready, with every nod, to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.”

His is a poor heritage who has spent all to win the world's praise, and who gets, in the long run, only the world's cold shoulder, if not its actual jeers and curses. If one had to make one's choice, better a thousandfold the portion of those who have cared nothing at all for the praise of men, and who, in a noble scorn of public opinion, have,

like their Master before them, endured the Cross and despised the shame.

3. It seems then, that the path of duty in this matter lies midway between these two false extremes—the stifling of the desire for human praise, and the exaggeration of that desire into the rule of life. Here, as so often in the moral realm, the ancient law of the “golden mean” holds good. The first extreme is to be avoided, except in very exceptional circumstances, because it is unnatural; it is a legitimate encouragement and enrichment of life to win the approbation of honest consciences round about us. The second extreme is always to be avoided because it cramps the soul, warps the moral standard and robs God of His place. Standing midway between these two false extremes, we are free to welcome with a good heart any honest praise that may come to us—thanking God for it as for any other refreshing breeze that may blow across the desert, any other well of sweet water that may spring up by the wayside. And if we value it for ourselves, we should learn to understand that it is equally valuable and equally encouraging to others. You do not know how much good you may do as you move through the world, just by speaking, as you have opportunity, a little word of praise. Remember it, you who have

children. Never scold your child, if you can at all avoid it, in presence of strangers ; there is nothing likelier to leave a scar upon the child's soul, or to begin the unhappiness of suspicion and division between child and parent ; especially if your children are growing up and beginning to feel and to assert their own individuality, never scold them in presence of strangers : if you must scold them, do it in private. But a word of praise sometimes comes with a double sweetness and helpfulness when there are other ears to hear it, and may mean much in the way of drawing your child towards yourself and towards the right path. Only, be on your guard, both for yourself and for your child, against making the end of life mere praise. Principle is a better guide of life than praise, because principle will thrive and help, even when praise may have died away, and the soul follows Christ alone through the great wilderness.

I want, as I close, to hang a talisman round the neck of any one who is a lover of praise. It is like a medal with two sides, and each side has its own inscription. The one side has this : " We have nothing that we have not received." It is to be looked at when men praise your gifts, your graces, your talents, your generousities, your services. And that gracious humility shall be like a charm

to keep your soul safe and sweet and true, even though the whole world shall give you its honour and applause. The other side has this: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." It is to be looked at when you feel yourself getting over-fond of praise, and it is most of all to be looked at when men begin to suggest that if you would keep their praise you must continue to walk in their paths. It is healthy to desire human praise; but sometimes there comes a point in life when it is healthier to be able to do without it, when the thought of the Master's praise becomes so much all in all that the world's praise or blame is as the small dust of the balance in comparison. "Well done, good and faithful servant"—that is the prize to be won. Now what are you willing to give for it—*if* it comes, *when* it comes to the paying of the price? These are the moments when our characters are tried as gold is tried in the fire.

XI

THE PARADOX OF REDEMPTION

“ Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf ; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”—2 COR. V. 21.

THERE are many to whom there is no dearer verse in the Book than this. But there are others who can only study it with knitted brows and puzzled minds. Sometimes perhaps they think they have glimpses of its meaning, but the momentary insight fades, and they are puzzled again. Their experience is like John Bunyan's in his groping days : he sometimes for his comfort got “ sweet glances ” at this and kindred verses. “ But these words were but hints, touches and short visits, though very sweet when present : only they lasted not ; but, like to Peter's sheet, of a sudden were caught up from me to heaven again.” Yet even if we do not always fully understand, we can feel somewhat of the tremendous import, and therefore of the tremendous importance of a verse like this ; its daring paradox seems to point us into the centre of things, and

its passionate intensity moves our hearts to wonder and to prayer.

Perhaps the verse is made somewhat easier if we are careful to distinguish between two things—one the *mannerism* of St. Paul, and the other the *message* that lies behind the mannerism. Paul's style is often very direct, compressed, and abrupt. And where some writer of looser method and less intense quality would put some word of connection or of comparison, Paul dispenses with all connecting links and puts a bold identification. Take for the sake of clearness a parallel instance, which is all the clearer because it is two instances in one. In another place he says, "*Ye were sometime darkness,*" not "*in darkness,*" not "*children of darkness,*" not "*in bondage to darkness,*" but by a bold and direct identification, "*Ye were darkness.*" And then he goes on, "*but now are ye light in the Lord*"—not "*ye have come into the light,*" nor "*ye have been brought to see the light*" ; but again by a bold and direct identification, "*Now are ye light.*" Perhaps such a parallel case throws light upon Paul's method of expression here, where by an equally daring identification, he speaks about Christ being *made sin* and ourselves being *made righteousness*.

Now after all, this method of vivid identification has something to say for itself. For when

you come to think of it you see that such moral conditions as "darkness" and "light" (in Paul's use of those terms), or such moral realities as "sin" and "righteousness," cannot be seen save in personal forms. Take *sin*. Sin, apart from actual human beings, is an abstraction, a generalization, a theory; you have never seen sin, except in the guise of living men and women. I write down the word sin, but it is only a symbol—three black letters on a white ground. I search the museums in vain for any specimen of sin. No chemist has ever stored and preserved a solution of sin. If the men and women living in the world were swept away, it would be impossible to discover sin in it any longer. A drunkard staggering home with his manhood all rent and bedraggled—that is sin. An evil-tempered man making his home a miserable place by his cross-grained and selfish ways—that is sin. A foul-mouthed man tempting others to evil, or a foul-hearted prodigal making his being a nest of evil desires—that is sin. You may argue about sin in the abstract; yet after all it has no reality save in the concrete—you can only see it in the personal form. And the same thing is true of *righteousness*. Again, this is an abstraction, an idea, a theory, apart from living men and women and the actual conduct of human affairs.

You may have many symbols of righteousness. You may have many guides and standards of righteousness. But there is no actual righteousness in the world save in living men and women who are acting uprightly in their individual or corporate capacities. A man refraining his foot from evil, spite of all opportunities of going astray—*that* is righteousness. A man daring to assault the strongholds of evil, hurling himself upon the spears of hate in the high interest of truth and justice—*that* is righteousness. A man enduring the reproach of evil men, and proving himself faithful unto death—*that* is righteousness. There is, then, a sense in which it is about as true to say that men and women *are* sin or righteousness as to say that they *have* sin or righteousness. Sin and righteousness are human things, personal things: human hearts and lives are the stage on which sin and righteousness display themselves.

I. Now with so much of preparatory thought, let us come closer to the text. And first let us look at this strange identification of *Christ* and *Sin*. You say this applies to the Cross. Of course it does, but I do not think it applies to the Cross alone, though it applies to the Cross supremely. Let Peter be a commentator on Paul, and tell us that Christ " bore our sins in His own body up to the tree " ; it was there that the burden

came to its heaviest, and it was there He laid it down ; but the sacrifice of His self-surrender stretched itself through the years. Now I turn to Paul's words, and this thought makes them luminous : I begin to see how full the whole story of Jesus and His love is of commentary upon these deep and terrible words, " He was made sin." I begin to see that if I want sin to display itself and reveal itself I cannot look anywhere so successfully as to the story of Christ. He knew no sin. He was sinless. He knew that He was sinless. God knew that He was sinless, and as God looked down from heaven there was no life so pure, so precious, so beautiful in His eyes as this life was. Yet herein is the paradox of redeeming love, that it is this life and this death which stand for ever to tell the world what sin is. Would you know the power of the lightnings ? This is the mountain peak that they have riven. Would you have a witness to the reality of the swords and spears ? Here are the scars that they have made. This is not theory. This is not hard hammered-out dogma, though sometimes the forms in which it has been expressed have been as hard as iron, and as cold. This is history—He was made sin. And if we could only feel how much history—how much of Christ's personal, painful, throbbing *experience* is in these words—

I think we could almost allow the dogma to take care of itself.

For look for a moment at the matter and consider it. We may as well pause at the very beginning and consider the Incarnation. Measure a disease by its remedy: and it must be a mighty disease which needs so mighty a cure. And then and there He was beginning to be made sin in being identified with and made part of a race which had sinned—its fetters fastened on His limbs, its burdens suspended on His shoulders, its characteristic sorrows and troubles lying across His necessary path. And from that beginning until the hour He died, it is simple truth to say that there was scarcely any part of the inheritance of sin which did not in some way fall upon Him; again I say we are here not in the region of theory but of history. It is a part of the meed of sin to be pointed out, to be branded, to be despised and hated. And it was of Him, the Sinless Man, that the respectable people of His day said with infinite scorn, "Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." It is a part of the meed of sin to bring strife and unrest with it; and was there ever such strife and such enmity round any path as round Him, the Sinless One? It is a part of the meed of sin to be driven in some sense out of

Eden into the wilderness ; and the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. It is a part of the meed of sin, and must be while a moral universe endures, to have sorrow and death for its attendants. He, the Sinless One, was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and had to set His face towards Jerusalem, there to suffer and to die. It is a part of the meed of sin, its deepest doom and its most characteristic portion, to create a sense of separation from God—to interpose clouds and darkness between earth and heaven : and it was from the Cross of Christ that there came the saddest cry that ever rent the heavens—" My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " Now can you imagine any line of experience which, to a sinless soul, was more genuinely full of sacrifice than this ? We talk about the sacrifice of Christ, and we scarcely grasp any of the reality of the word, it is so familiar : we do not feel the throb of His heart in it : we do not sympathise with his intolerable pain. But we might ! I ask again—can you imagine any line of experience which, to a sinless soul, was more genuinely full of sacrifice than this ? I do not know what you feel about the orthodox theory of the Atonement : I am more anxious to lead people to reality than to orthodoxy. But I want you to notice, account for it as you please,

how much historical reality lies behind Paul's phrase, "He was made sin." In very truth the sinless Christ passed step by step and stage by stage through ever-deepening experiences which would have been the legitimate portion of the worst of sinners—experiences which, if some crime-stained wretch had passed through them, would have inclined us to say, "It serves him right." Lest we be bewildered altogether, let us turn to the other side of the matter, and see whether there is any sign of wrong turning into right, or of light breaking from this great darkness.

2. So we turn to the second half of the verse and study Paul's sequence of thought. Having identified Christ with sin in this strange abrupt way, he goes on in a somewhat similar way to *identify believing souls with righteousness*. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The usual interpretation of these words applies them, I think, to the acceptance of the believing soul—his forgiveness, his justification. That, of course, is included, but I think it is also transcended. Just as on the one hand it takes a whole Christ and not merely a portion of His history to fill out the great meaning of the words "He was made sin," so, I think, it requires a whole Christian experience, and not merely the initial stages of it, to fill out the full meaning of

these words, "That we might be made righteousness in Him." As on the one hand you cannot find such a commentary upon sin as you find in the experience of Christ, so, on the other hand, you cannot find such an illustration of righteousness as in the souls in whom the work of Christ bears its fruits, beginning and growing and going on to perfection. Just as Christ was treated in this world as if He were sin, so His people are treated here and hereafter as if they were righteousness. Consider this also for a moment. What is the meed of righteousness? Well, righteousness deserves the *sunlight* at least, does it not? A fair field and a clear sky! That is what the people of Christ receive from God—the fair field, the clear sky, the sunlight of His forgiving smile: "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." And what is the meed of righteousness? Well, righteousness deserves *life and progress*, does it not? Evil deserves extinction, but righteousness should have "the wages of going on." And that is what the people of Christ get from God—life and life abundant, growth in knowledge and in strength, the path that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And what is the meed of righteousness? Is it not *victory*? Evil deserves defeat, but righteousness deserves triumph abundant. And that also is the portion

of the people of Christ—the power to overcome evil with good, and to share in the victory that overcometh the world. And what is the meed of righteousness? Is it not *immortality*? Is there anything else that deserves to live when the mountains have crumbled and the sun is cold? Is there anything else that deserves to shine as the stars for ever and ever? Yet this also is the portion of the people of God. For Christ gives unto His people eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand. And so the paradox of redemption is complete in this—that even as the Sinless Christ found the sorrows and burdens of sin clustering round Him from first to last, we, who know ourselves to be sinners, have for our inheritance the victories and rewards of righteousness—not of our own deserving, but out of God's great mercy.

Now out of all this two great lights flash forth—one upon *God*, and one upon *ourselves*. Here is a great light upon *God*. For it is God who does it all: *He* hath made Him to be sin. There used to be a way of stating the sacrifice of Christ as if it were something flung at the feet of an angry God to persuade Him to change His mind. But God did not need to change His mind. The Ministry of Reconciliation began in His own heart before ever it expressed itself in the perfect

Life or the wondrous Death. It was necessary that the world should be redeemed by sacrifice ; but the sacrifice that redeemed us was the sacrifice of *God*, and the price that bought us was the gift of *God*. “ *He* hath made Him to be Sin ” ; and when we see Christ identifying Himself with our sinful race, even to the uttermost of all that was involved in that, we know that the heart of God is thus entangled in our sorrow, and the hands of God are stretched out to save us from our sin. That is why this message is so melting, so subduing, so morally magnificent. It was of the message of this verse that Goethe said, “ There is nothing diviner than this.” And there is indeed nothing diviner than this—that God Himself should stoop to share the lot of His creatures, even to the deepest that was involved in their sin, and should raise them to His own righteousness, and so to His own glory and immortality. This is a God we can worship. His nature and His name is Love.

For here also is a light upon *ourselves* and our own possibilities. We want to make something of ourselves—What shall it be ? Shall we allow God to make us—righteousness ? To make us the righteousness of God ? To give us this divine standing and hope and victory ? We must bestir our hearts to receive the message, to take the gift,

to live the life ; since, because Christ has lived and died, all things are possible. "That we might be made . . ." What hope, what promise, what victory lies there ! I have somewhere read of an American statesman who sinned a certain sin. On his deathbed he asked for a dictionary : he wanted, he said, to look up the word "Remorse." The physician told him there was no dictionary in the room. "Take a card then," said he, "and write on it the word that best symbolizes my soul. Write it in large letters. Underscore it—the word Remorse." It was done as he desired, and after he had gazed upon it for a time, he handed the card again to the doctor. "What shall I do with it ?" said the puzzled physician. "Put it in your pocket," was the reply ; "and when I am gone, take it out and look at it, and say, 'That is the soul of John Randolph.' " That is what some men have made of themselves—remorse, living remorse, incarnate remorse. But God desires that we should be made something better than that : He desires that we should be made righteousness. It is possible.

"Just and holy is Thy name,
 I am all unrighteousness ;
 False and full of sin I am,
 Thou art full of truth and grace."

"He was made sin that we might be made

righteousness." Lord Christ ! Thou hast Thy task before Thee in some of us. Begin it. Pursue it. Complete it against the day when Thy books are opened.

XII

OUR WRESTLING

“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers.”—EPH. vi. 12.

OUR wrestling would be an easier task if it were against flesh and blood. Foes of flesh and blood are at least definite, visible, tangible: you can get at them, and you know when you have knocked them down. But this vague combat with the invisible, the impalpable, the cosmic, it is like thrusting your sword into a cloud: you may thrust it in indeed, but you may also draw it forth, and when you have done so, no blood is spilt: the cloud is there as it was before. I think I would rather have Don Quixote's windmills and wine-skins to fight with: they would at any rate be less elusive, less incalculable. But we are not given our choice: the conflict is prescribed for us, and there is something cosmic about it, something vague and vast which may be expressed in various ways. Principalities and powers, says St. Paul. The world, says

St. John. Other teachers may see from other standpoints different aspects of the same tremendous struggle. Let me put it in my own way. What do you think of *Space* and *Time* and *Sense* as three of the antagonists with whom we wrestle when we try to live the believing life? These foes are elementary indeed, part of the stuff and substance of the universe we live in. But if they have an elemental simplicity they have also an elemental pervasiveness and omnipresence. There is no getting away from them; and we shall have to fight the good fight of faith against them, and hold to the believing life in spite of them, until we reach the levels of another existence, where Space and Time and Sense have faded like a dream.

1. I begin with *Space*. For it is a curious thing that the more conscious man has become of Space, the more that consciousness has weighed against the Christian belief. Once upon a time, people had small sense of space: they did not know the universe they lived in: they did not know of their own relation to that universe, or they dreamed a relation very different from the truth. The earth was flat. Over it there was "that inverted bowl we call the sky." Sun, moon and stars were lit for the sake of it. Man was the centre of all things and his world the obvious focus of

creative care. Conceiving of his world—his physical world—in this fashion, he shaped the spiritual universe accordingly: it was comparatively easy to believe in Incarnation, Revelation, Redemption and all manner of mighty deeds done for a world so central in the scheme of God. By and by there came a change. Men learned to know the real universe. The science of astronomy pushed out the irrationalities of astrology. Men discovered that the world was not stationary but moving—a moving part of a moving system; that it was not central, but a subordinate member of a subordinate constellation; that instead of being the focus of creative care, it at all events shared that care with other worlds too many to be numbered. And though this was a mighty addition to truth, it became and still is an equally mighty difficulty for faith. It has often been frankly said that astronomy destroyed Christianity. “When people began to realize the fact,” Sir Leslie Stephen says,¹ “that we live in a wretched little atom of a planet dancing about the sun, instead of being the whole universe, with a few stars to save candle-light, the ancient orthodoxy was shaken to its base.” Even when this has not been so frankly expressed, it has been dumbly and dimly felt: the chill of the spaces

¹ *Essays on Free Thinking and Plain Speaking*, p. 105.

that lie between the constellations throws a frost upon our souls. "Help us, O God," the Breton sailor prays, "the sea is so great, and our boats are so small." But there are men and women alive to-day to whom that sense of space is an argument not for prayer but for dumbness. I am one among so many millions. The world on which these millions crawl and fight and die is but a pebble in the ocean. Were it to be dissolved as many other worlds have been dissolved whose dust now floats through space, it would never be missed. That God should care for me, should think of me, should send His Son to redeem my world and me—where shall I find faith enough to believe that, or conviction enough to proclaim it? "When I look up into the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained"—once they turned that gaze into a song: it is now one of our temptations to turn the song into a sob, or at least a silence. Was it not Thomas Carlyle who called the starlit heavens "a sad sight?" Before the mere sense of space, faith and the joy of it seem sometimes to die. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against—*that*!

Nevertheless, we must keep up our wrestling, warily, stubbornly, even cheerfully! Do not take it too readily for granted that Giant Space is

going to have it all his own way in this seemingly unequal struggle. He has a weak point, and if you can find it, you may throw him yet and over his prostrate body climb into the seventh heaven. The place to take hold of is this—that even a man does not measure the value of his possessions or of his creations by their size. Think of your possessions. Here is a log of wood : it is big : do you therefore prize it ? Nay, you put it on the fire when your feet are cold : its fellow you will burn to-morrow night. Here is a jewel, a family heirloom : it is small : do you therefore scorn it ? Nay, it is guarded under lock and key, and if it is lost many other matters can wait : the house is turned upside down until the missing jewel is found. Think of your creations if you are a producer, master of any craft or art. You know that some of your smaller productions are worth much more than some of the big things you have roughly knocked together : you have put into them so much skill and toil and care, so much cunningness of adjustment and carefulness of plan, that their size is not in the least degree the measure of their worth. And so, even in face of all that has been discovered as to the greatness of the universe, faith must learn to assert herself, and not bow the knee to space even for one moment. Space measurements are irrelevant here.

Though our world be a small world, it may nevertheless be precious in God's sight. Though we be as insects in mere size, yet if we have souls, these souls after all may be worth redeeming. And what was at first sight incredible may seem to second thoughts most reasonable : " God so loved the world "—this little world !—" that He gave His only-begotten Son."

2. I turn from Space to *Time*. For here also is one of the powers we have to wrestle with ; and even when Space is conquered, this antagonist, also of the brood of the giants, has to be faced. Let us suppose that our wrestling with the problem of space is successful, that we can gaze unblenched upon the exceeding vastness of the universe, deeming that for faith this matters nothing at all : let the trumpets blow for one victory at least. But now the struggle renews itself in another form. Grant the worth of the soul and the possibility of redemption in spite of the chilling vastness of space, why does not redemption come more quickly ? If God deigns to turn His chariot towards this little corner of His universe, why tarry the wheels of it ? If the world is loved and not ignored, why does not His Kingdom come ? This is an old difficulty for believing hearts : they were wrestling with it towards the close of the New Testament period

—witness the Second Epistle of Peter. The Christ had come: He had left in the hearts of His own the hope that He would come again: all the wonder of His first coming had not been out of proportion either to the promises of God or to the needs of men; and no sign upon the sky, no wonder upon the earth, could be out of proportion to the same promises and needs. Yet the days and months rolled on into years, the years into decades, the decades into generations; and Time, instead of being the vindicator of the Master's words, seemed rather to mock alike His promises and His people's hopes. "Where is the promise of His coming?" they began to ask, and to say, it might be in mockery, it might be in despair, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the world." It is an old difficulty and it is a new one: it is one which, like the difficulty created by our knowledge of space, we of these later generations must feel more keenly than the Christians of the first days. Sometimes the problem grows to a passionate intensity in hours of chaos and overthrow, when Time seems to undo with his own hands any good he has achieved: the miserable futility of things cries to us like the maniac maid in Shelley's poem¹ —

¹ *The Masque of Anarchy.*

"My Father Time is weak and grey
 With waiting for a better day ;
 See how idiot-like he stands
 Fumbling with his palsied hands.
 He has had child after child,
 And the dust of death is piled
 Over every one but me—
 Misery ! oh Misery ! "

And even apart from such crises of ruin and distress, some of those who have faced and laid the spectres of the mind will tell you that they have confronted no spectre grimmer than old Father Time, laden with questions sharper than his scythe. God loves the world : why then does He leave it half in the night, when by His promised lightning, shining from the east to the west, He might in a moment illumine it all ? Christ promised His own victory and reign : why then have we reached this twentieth century with only such bare beginnings and instalments of that triumph ? He said that the future would be His ally and His vindicator : why then does He allow human progress to creep in this petty pace from one to-morrow to another, as though to the last syllable of recorded time there were going to be no hastening ? These questions are hard to answer : we wrestle with them : yet at the best it is night-wrestling, like Jacob's, wrestling and vigil together, and the day has not yet broken.

Now here also Faith must assert herself and not allow high-handed Time to carry it all his own way : here also the wrestling must go on, and the opponent has his weak points. It is a wise plan to set Time to wrestling with himself, and to answering himself : he has indeed so much to say to himself that Faith can find at least a breathing-space to quicken her courage. Time after all has a good many things to say that are Faith's very food and strength. It is not true, it never was true, that all things continue as they were : that is the exaggeration of fear, or the excuse of laziness and cowardice. In the earliest generations, all things did not continue as they were. Jerusalem fell, and the Master's threatenings were justified by that amazing Day of Judgment. The Spirit came upon the Church, and so He did not leave His disciples orphans : He came to them. All things certainly did not continue as they were. And if you look through history you will indeed find periods of stagnation, ebb-tides of faith, the breath of the night-wind, the retreat of the army that should be advancing, the slumber of those who should have loins girt and lamps lit. But you also will find both gradual growth and sudden upheaval. You will find growth, if you take a wide enough survey. "The lesson of life," Emerson says, "is to believe what the years and

the centuries say against the hours." And you will find cataclysm, the great days of His appearing, when the things that are shaken pass in order that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Faith has history behind her when she thrusts Time aside that she may look beyond him to the eternal throne, refusing to be wearied by his slowness, or chilled by his cynicism, or strangled by his persistent clutch. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years : a thousand years are as one day. "The tyranny of time," Faber says, "sits lightly on Divine works : they have other measures." So, trying to judge by those other measures, we keep believing : let the trumpets blow for another victory.

3. There waits one antagonist more—his name is *Sense*. Let us suppose that Faith has overthrown the arguments of Space, and recognizes that man may be beloved of God though his world is small : let us suppose that Faith has also refused to be hoodwinked by Time, and sees a vast Reality growing through the ages, which Time serves with every step and pulse : still the question remains, why cannot we get at that Reality more easily ? We are told that it fills all space, yet we cannot touch it with our hands : that it is growing upon the future, like daybreak upon darkness, yet we cannot see it with our

eyes : that it is all-important for the world to welcome it, yet it lays no compulsory arrest upon the world which needs it. And sometimes mere Sense succeeds where Space and Time have failed—succeeds in strangling Faith. We believe in what we see. We hold what we can grasp. We are sure of what we can touch. And under the spell of that logic, men sink down upon the seen and temporal and dream no more of the unseen and eternal. It was said by some one long ago that it was easy to believe in immortality, so long as one was reading Plato : mind and heart gave their assent together to an argument so lofty and to pleading so reasonable. But that was only as long as one was reading Plato : when the book was closed, the reasoning seemed to lose its power, the impression faded, one seemed shut into this present world. Many men to-day are repeating that experience. They read a Book which bears a far sweeter and more powerful witness to the unseen than Plato ever could give : the music of it soothes their souls : its statements are grave with a solemn assurance : it is associated with moments of worship when a man is at his best and God seems nearest. But as they close the Book or leave the Church there is a change : the world reasserts itself : things seen become so plain and powerful that things unseen

are pale and poor by comparison. The power of sense lays hold of them, refusing to give them more than the eye can see and the hands touch. And if they try to peer past their antagonist and catch a glimpse of something higher and diviner, it sometimes seems as though even a great wrestling could scarcely accomplish their end. How many have been conquered here, their souls stifled within them, and they themselves left—

“With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth’s paddock as her prize!”

Here also Faith must live by insisting upon herself, by insisting upon her right to live, by wrestling still, patiently, bravely, prayerfully. By insisting upon herself, did I say? say rather, by insisting upon Christ, and by cleaving to Him with all her powers. We have seen how Space chills Faith: how Time wearies her: how Sense hampers, chokes and blinds her. We wrestle—we who try to believe and keep believing—not against flesh and blood, but against such all-pervading antagonisms as these. But the answer to Sense is Christ: He brings near to us the things that Sense could never have discovered. And the answer to the browbeating of Time is Christ: Time may be slow or swift, but Christ came in the fullness of the time, and if the end is to be worthy

of such a beginning the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon. And as for the chilling consciousness of Space, Christ is a reality so transcendent that every form of physical measurement becomes small beside Him : He—

“Spurned the tame laws of Time and Space,
And brake through all the heavens to our embrace,”

because He is Love, and Love tolerates no barriers nor counts distance any obstacle to its passionate desire. We wrestle, then. We refuse to yield. Be it with flesh and blood, or be it with principalities and powers, we wrestle, we who believe, and the daybreak shall find us unconquered. We defy Space—we who measure our height by inches. We defy Time—we who measure our lives by years and days. We defy Sense ; we who are of the earth refuse to be made earthly by our earthiness. We believe in Christ. And this is the victory that overcometh, even our faith.

XIII

FULL ASSURANCE

"Full assurance of understanding."—COL. ii. 2.

"Full assurance of hope."—HEB. vi. 11.

"Full assurance of faith."—HEB. x. 22.

THERE is something musical about the phrase when we hear it repeated and insisted on like this. Does it seem like an old-world music, remote from the style and taste of to-day? Does it fall upon our hearts somewhat as the chiming of ancient bells might fall upon a traveller's ear who was passing hurriedly in train or motor beneath the shadow of cathedral towers—very charming in its own way, but quite remote from the purposes of the present journey? Full assurance is somewhat out of fashion. Long ago they had what were called the "ages of faith." Long ago people were able to be dogmatic with a clear conscience. Nowadays we doubt, we question, we grope, and in our better moods we aspire: but we are all more or less at the mercy of that interesting Devil about whom Olive

Schreiner speaks—the gentlemanly and educated Devil who comes to us with his head on one side, asking questions ; and so we are by no means so sure as our fathers were about many points. And also we are in haste to pass upon our way, because there are some other things about which we are perfectly sure, and we want to get at them and fill our arms with them as quickly as possible. Nevertheless it might be good for us to sit quietly for a little while under the shadow of the apostolic certainties, and listen to these old-world bells that tell of full assurance. There is something soothing in the very sound of them ; I wonder whether we can make their music our own ; I wonder whether we can ever hear them, not from some lofty and ancient steeple only, but deep within our own hearts, like the bells of the city of Is, deep down beneath the heaving sea.

Different things combine to make full assurance difficult of attainment. I pass over the case of those who are positively blameworthy in the matter, those who have no assurance about the unseen and divine simply because they have been too lazy to set about getting it ; those who have never given diligence to make their calling and election sure ; those who have no light because they have loved the darkness more than the light. But in some cases there are constitutional tenden-

cies which make full assurance difficult, perhaps make it difficult to the very end. That type of character has never been more beautifully described than in the case of Mr. Fearing, who carried about with him everywhere he went a Slough of Despond inside his mind, and who, even when the wicket gate stood open before him, hesitated and trembled, wondering whether he might enter in. Samuel Rutherford speaks in one of his letters of those who sign their names to the covenant of salvation with ink that can hardly be read, and there are a few of those people still surviving : they sign their names to God's covenant, but somehow or other their inkstand supplies them with ink that is largely water, and their signature, though they want to write it clearly, is faint and poor. And just as there are constitutional difficulties for individuals, so there are atmospheric difficulties that beset whole ages and communities and seem to cut them off from full assurance. The world in the spiritual as well as in the physical realm has its Novembers full of fog : it has its Newfoundland banks where the vapours lie heavy : it has its periods of indecision and uncertainty ; not perhaps because people are thoughtless but even in some cases because people have thought so much. They have accustomed themselves to listen to many different voices and to consider

many different arguments: they might say of themselves as Northumberland says in Shakespeare's play—

“ 'Tis with my mind
As with the tide swell'd up unto his height
That makes a still-stand, running neither way.”

And no strong breeze seems to clear away the mists or to set a definite current flowing in the direction of conviction and assurance. Still, I call you back to the sound of these bells, if I may return to my first figure of speech. There is no harm in listening to them. They will supply us with an ideal at least. And possibly we may attain sometime and somehow, with the help of that God of grace who graciously desires us to be sure of Himself.

1. Here is the first note that sounds in our hearing—*full assurance of understanding*. You would almost guess, even if you did not know, that this was a phrase from one of Paul's letters. It is one of his characteristic notes: a great believer and a great ambassador for faith, he did not fail, as all the greatest believers have not failed, to pay almost as much honour to the intellect that understands as to the heart that believes: you remember how in a parallel passage in Philippians he prays for his converts that their love may

abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment. Here in Colossians he tells his readers how he wrestles towards this end : he wants them to know what great wrestling he has for them that they may attain this full assurance of understanding. His epistles with all their magnificent strenuousness of thought are the best comment upon his words : they are athletic Epistles : he did not spare himself that his readers might understand. In the case of these Colossian readers there was need for specially energetic action. There were teachers arising who asserted that they had the true *Gnosis*, the true knowledge, the true insight into Christian doctrine : and if you only say a thing loud enough and often enough you will get people to believe you : it is possible in that way to deceive the very elect. Paul's wrestling for his readers was that they might be like the good hearers of our Lord's parable, understanding the word, so fully possessing it and possessed by it that there should be no room for evil to lodge and grow. It is an ideal that does honour to our human nature. They who slight intellect in the name of faith have the New Testament against them, not for them. There are no prizes in the school of Christ for stupidity, still less for credulity. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind as well as with all thy heart.

And certainly if we want any encouragement to think out Christianity and to exercise our intelligence in regard to it, could we have any better challenge than these very letters of Paul, which show us the heights and depths we have to explore, which open up paths into the depths and the heights, and which summon us on every page to a full assurance of understanding ?

2. The next in logical order is the sweet chime of those words in Hebrews about *full assurance of faith*. It is needed to complete the thought we have just had before us. We must try to get an intellectual grasp of as much as possible, deeming that our minds were given us to exercise in the realm of grace and truth as much as anywhere else. Yet there are some things beyond all our seeing and measuring. If it be folly to sneer at intellect in the name of faith, perhaps it is an even commoner folly to use our understanding as the tape-line by which we measure the universe of light and love. Faith must not dissociate herself from understanding because understanding gives reasonableness to faith ; but understanding must not drive faith away as an interloper, because faith gives wings to understanding. So let us at least consider, and consider that we may covet, this full assurance of faith. There is a shallow and impudent assurance that is best described by

the somewhat undignified word "cocksureness": it is without humility, without reverence, without depth: it is the attitude of shallow souls who have reduced truth to a few formulæ and for whom the universe contains no Holiest of All. This full assurance of faith is not like that. If I were to search for a historical example of it, I think I would select Joan of Arc. "Are you in a state of grace?" her judges asked her. And her fine answer was this: "If I am not, may God put me there! If I am, may God keep me there! I should be the saddest in all the world, if I were not in the grace of God." There you have a soul going quietly and resolutely on in the appointed path, trusting every step of the way, yet trembling even while she trusts, and turning her trembling into prayer. And the full assurance of faith, which is best worth coveting, is an assurance which unites in itself the two qualities of humility and boldness, which ventures on the pathway to the unseen with humility because it is the path to God, and yet with courage because the great High Priest has gone on before.

3. And now I turn to my middle text and *the full assurance of hope*. For having drawn two base-lines—one on the earth, in the understanding, and one up among the stars, by faith—we are ready to make exploration of the unknown

and limitless future. Christian Hope is about equally the product of these two factors—the understanding, working upon experience; and faith, which even beyond the limits of understanding and experience, asserts the love and faithfulness of God. A hope without some basis of understanding would be an irrational hope, and a hope without some basis of faith would be a sorely bounded hope, hemmed in by narrow horizons of sense and time. “We covet,” says the author of Hebrews: it is a strenuous word that might have been used by St. Paul himself. “We covet that ye do shew diligence”—he wants to make his hearers strenuous too; and perpetual diligence is needed to keep hope fresh and strong in a world that is so often enervating in its nearer climate and foggy on its farther horizons. But I like best this special turn of his thought: “We covet that *each of you* do shew diligence unto the full assurance of hope.” The Church’s hope will be kept alight in any case, somehow and by some one: Christ trims the golden candlesticks and will not let it die. But the writer wants his readers to realize how much may depend upon each separate life maintaining its hope unto the end. That is the lesson that Matthew Arnold intertwines with the wreath he lays on his father’s tomb—

"If, in the paths of the world,
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing, to us thou wast still
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm !
 Therefore to thee it was given
 Many to save with thyself ;
 And at the end of thy day,
 O faithful shepherd ! to come
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand."

And we too do not know how much may depend for other lives upon our maintaining our personal hope and purpose. The light in our lives may be to some one else God's very message of encouragement. If we let it go out, it may mean that for some soul near us there may be no more encouragement but only despair. Therefore give diligence, each of you, to maintain the full assurance of hope *unto the end*.

It goes without saying that the full assurance which is spoken of in all these passages is not the solving of all problems, nor the answering of all questions, nor the clearing away of all difficulties. But I should like you to turn the passages over in your mind for a moment before we leave them, just to see what is the practical worth of the full assurance which is spoken of so musically. In the passage in Colossians, the leading thought is *comfort*, comfort in its true meaning of strengthen-

ing : and the full assurance hinted at there is enough for comfort and strengthening, a knowledge of God and of Christ sufficient to warm us amidst the manifold winter and rough weather of the world. In the passage in Hebrews about faith, the leading thought is *worship* ; it is the thought of drawing near into the innermost, into the holiest of all : and the full assurance spoken of is enough to enable us to worship, to come with our sins and leave them at the mercy seat, to come with our fears and doubts and burdens and lay them down before the Father's throne. In the other passage in Hebrews the leading thought is *perseverance* : it is full of anxiety lest the readers should turn aside and fall away : the full assurance of hope is what is needed to keep them from being sluggish, and to make them followers of those who through faith and patience do already inherit the promises. I think we can regard a good many unsolved problems with equanimity if we can attain full assurance in these three senses—the full assurance of understanding that will comfort and strengthen us, the full assurance of faith that will keep us near the Throne of Grace, the full assurance of hope that will keep us in the path of quest till we reach our promised land. We need them all, and the last is not the least :—

"When after all the strife and wearying
 We come in contact with the great true thing
 Which points the term of all,—will that be such
 As will make compensation over much
 For the long disillusion and sharp sting?
 Who knows? This only,—*its most distant touch*
 Thrills our heart's instrument in every string." ¹

So we have heard the bells of full assurance,
 and we have listened to them ringing their changes
 —full assurance of understanding, full assurance
 of faith, full assurance of hope. I have spoken
 of these things as ideals at least: they may be
 already the attainments of some: they must be in
 any case the ideals of all. But ideals are meant
 to be realized: how shall we attain? Now it is
 hard to put an answer into few words, for there
 are many types of character and many forms of
 uncertainty. There are intellectual difficulties
 that need to be cleared away, and it is wonderful
 what a wise book, answering current difficulties,
 will sometimes do just by meeting the perplexities
 of the average man, and so smoothing the path
 towards full assurance.² Yet we need something
 different and something deeper: we need not only
 explanations and apologetics; we need experi-
 ences. Newman, following Butler, said that truth

¹ A. E. Waite. *Strange Houses of Sleep*.

² Many ministers would mention with thankfulness
 in such a connection Dr. R. E. Welsh's *In Relief of Doubt*
 and Dr. Carnegie Simpson's *The Fact of Christ*.

in the religious realm could not be proved with mathematical certainty : certainty was the result of cumulative probabilities : this is probable, that is probable, therefore I must take the path the probabilities point. That reasoning, as he used it, made him a Roman Catholic. But it was something else that long before had made him a Christian, " an inward conversion," of which he said in his old age, " I am still more certain than that I have hands and feet." And experience is as much greater than argument as to be a Christian is a greater thing than to be a Catholic. We miss the chief element in full assurance if we cannot say with the man in the Gospels, " One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Let us ask God for that : let us refuse to let Him go until He gives us that. And that will be the root and source of all other certainty and assurance. Once upon a time there was a man who was beset with many perplexities. He tried various ways of escape, but at last he summed up his own case in these words : " I see there is nothing for me except my Bible and my knees." Could St. Paul himself have put it better? My Bible and my knees—your Bible and your knees—until the day break and the shadows flee away !

XIV

THE EXALTATION AND DEGRADATION OF WONDER

“All the world wondered after the beast.”—REV.
xiii. 3.

THIS is one of the most vivid phrases in a
marvellously vivid book. The chapter of
course reflects a historical situation: the pomp
and glory of the Roman Empire flare through
it like fire: the presence of the Emperor Nero
falls across it like a dark and heavy shadow. The
first beast rising out of the sea is the Roman
Empire: the head with the mouth speaking great
and blasphemous things is Nero, the Emperor in
whom the Roman power was for the time incar-
nate: the second monster coming to the help of
the first and exercising his power for a time is
the power of the Pagan priesthood which mean-
time served the Empire by persecuting the Chris-
tian Church. Details are sometimes difficult as in
all apocalyptic literature. But the main outlines
all confirm this as the sanest and likeliest inter-

pretation of the symbolic sentences. The note of blasphemy is of course a plain allusion to the prevalent Cæsar-worship, which constituted for the time the greatest difficulty of the Church's case. The tragedy of the hour was that a Christian man's faith and his patriotism came into conflict : if he did not worship Cæsar he was counted disloyal : and worship Cæsar he could not if he was a disciple of Christ. The demand of the Roman Emperors for this worship was hard to resist, because it was the demand of the controlling force in the world of the time—a demand that represented not only vast powers of compulsion, but resources perhaps even vaster of awe, wonder and admiration. “ *All the world wondered after the beast.*” Here was one of the reasons why it was so difficult to win the world for Christ and for better things : the wealth and power and glory of the beast had laid a spell upon the wide earth ; and most men for the time were the beast's slaves and devotees. It was hard to make an impression upon the world while the world was so absorbed : it was hard to get the cruelties of the present situation abolished while the world was so spell-bound and obedient. You have seen a procession winding through the streets of a town, and a crowd pouring after it, open-mouthed, open-eyed, absorbed in the pomp and glitter, for

the time oblivious of all else. Even so the pomp and glory of Rome were the world's pageant, and the world had eyes and heart for nothing beside. What mattered it if some weak folk went to the wall? What mattered it if the horses and chariots crushed down the bodies of living men? What mattered it if the roadway was red with the blood of God's slaughtered saints? The world did not care for these things—scarcely noticed them. Its eyes and its heart were elsewhere: the whole world wondered after the beast.

I pause especially upon this word *Wonder*. It is a word that may lead you *up*: it is also, this phrase being witness, a word that may lead you *down*. Wonder in itself is one of the most necessary, common, and delightful ingredients in human education. A child's mind is opened and stimulated very largely through its sense of wonder. But here also, as in the case of so many of our faculties and capacities, we come, as we grow older, to the parting of the ways. There is a wonder that draws us towards the stars, and there is a wonder that draws us towards the abyss.

1. Take a moment to follow the idea *upwards*. There is a Wonder from which it is but a step to Worship. The house of Wonder, built by the poets, with the fairies to fetch and carry, is next door to the house of Worship, and there are gates

that communicate between the gardens of that pleasure-house and the cloisters of this temple. Worship, like a great many common ideas, is very hard to define : it is one of the words we are continually using and scarcely ever stop to examine. Worship—what is it made of? Well, there is knowledge in it : you cannot worship One of whom you know nothing at all. And there is desire in it : unless there be desire in it, worship will be the slavish performance of a duty, and so will scarcely be worship in spirit and in truth. But now add to knowledge and to desire just a touch of *wonder*, and then see how close you are to essential worship—to the experience and the practice of those who have best taught us the meaning of worship. I turn to the Psalmists and I see how full their worship is of a wondering thankfulness : “ O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men ! ” And I turn to the apostolic theologians and see how their minds are full of a wondering thoughtfulness : nothing is commonplace in the enchanted realms wherein they move ; nothing is shallow : at their feet waters to swim in, above their heads height upon height, Pelion upon Ossa, until Paul himself can only cry, “ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearch-

able are His judgments and His ways past tracing out ! ” Now you will rise high if you reach these two attainments—a wondering thankfulness and a wondering thoughtfulness. “ I love to lose myself in a mystery,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “ to pursue my reason to an *O Altitudo* ” ; he loved to arrive at Paul’s point, “ O the depth ! ” Some of us do not pursue our reason quite so far as that. Our reason takes us a very short pilgrimage, and then sits down and slumbers. Do not allow it to do that. Prick it with your sword. Take it by the shoulders and shake the sluggishness out of it. Make it go on and lead you to the mountain-ridge, until you stand panting beside it, with the heights and depths of God’s spacious revelation above, below, around. This note of wonder—wondering thankfulness, wondering thoughtfulness—is very plain in the lives of all God’s best saints. Take two instances only. Here is a sentence from one of Rutherford’s *Letters* : “ If Christ would but open up His love, and give me leave to stand beside it, like an hungry man beside meat, to get my fill of wondering as a preface to my fill of enjoying ! ” He knows how near wonder and worship are to each other, how the soul is led on from the outer court to the central shrine. Take a few phrases from the Lady Julian’s *Revelations of Divine Love*. Speak-

ing of the Vision of God, she says : “ Truth seeth God, and Wisdom beholdeth God, and of these two cometh the third—that is a holy, wondering delight in God, which is Love.” And again speaking of the soul’s fellowship with God, she says : “ God joyeth in His creature, and the creature in God, endlessly wondering.” So wonder is a great word, and a great thing, and it can lead us high. Herein is a part of that saying true : “ Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Little children—*endlessly wondering* !

2. But now in the second place take the same word and follow it *downhill* ; for my text reminds us that it is very easy for this same capacity of wonder to start upon a downward track. It is easy for men and women to wonder at the wrong things, to go gaping and staring after a pageant of pomps and vanities instead of fastening heart and eyes upon God and His mighty works. Consider the case of this world of long ago. Rome had three qualities to awaken men’s wonder. She had size ; she had strength ; she had glitter. She had size, having brought almost the whole known world within her ample dominions : it was impossible to escape from the shadow of her majesty. She had strength : there were no limits to her armies or to her resources : she named

herself Eternal Rome, and looked to the eye as though she were built for eternity : men were but as puppets in her grasp, and nations broke themselves against her in vain. And she had glitter : she knew the value of a pageant even as an instrument of government : she knew that if you can catch the eye of the multitude and glut its heart with splendours, you are going a long way to make it your very humble and obedient servant. So the Emperors had their triumphs when they came home victorious from the wars : the people had their spectacular displays, almost as necessary to them as their daily bread ; and led captive by the three-fold spell of strength, size and glitter, all the world wondered after the beast ! I have spoken of wonder as a quality of childhood, and we all know that childhood may develop either into a noble childlikeness or into an ignoble childishness. And the difference between the childlikeness of the Christian man and the childishness of the slaves of the beast lay largely in this—that they followed the two different paths of wonder.

Now the world we live in—thanks to Christ and His Kingdom !—is in many respects so much changed from the world of long ago that we find it hard to transfer and apply to it some of the New Testament denunciations. Yet when we analyse things a little, we see how permanent

some of the ingredients of living are, and we still need to keep our consciences awake lest we too feel the spell of the beast upon us and go wondering after him. Is there nothing now in the spell of mere *size* ? Why, what a force, what a dominating, enslaving force, the multitude can be merely because it *is* a multitude, merely because it is big ! How it sometimes sucks the individuality out of a man, silencing his conscience, crushing his independence, making him the slave of fashion and the tool of custom ! And is there nothing now to dread in the spell of *power* ? Sometimes it almost seems as if men were power-worshippers quite as much as in the old days when might was right and the Roman Beast by his mere power got the world to be his servant. Perhaps to us the spell of power is most apt to come as the spell of money : money is power : money can accomplish so many things, and can ward off so many evils : all the honours of the struggle of life are so apt to come to the man who has this weapon or who can by fair means or foul obtain it, that the spell of it is hard to shake off, and even good people show how much they are under its sway. And is there nothing now to dread in the spell of mere *glitter* ? It is difficult to be alone with the stars if we live in a thoroughfare where electric sky-signs flash and flaunt all the night

long. Are we not tending to be worshippers of the sky-sign, so much that we are almost forgetting to look higher and farther, and to watch for God's signs upon the sky? I mean this—that it is very easy to get under the spell of glitter and show; to have as the ideal and aim of life mere enjoyment on the one hand, mere display on the other; to be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of duty, to be worshippers of notoriety rather than worshippers of God? How shallow, how poor, how essentially narrow are the lives that are lived along that track! And so to-day as in the days of old it is possible to come under the spell of bigness, the spell of power, the spell of mere tinsel and paint and glitter, to follow the track left by many gaping generations who have gone wondering after the Beast.

Now what do we need to save our souls from this evil spell? We need a counter-spell, a counter-active, a vision of the balance and proportion of things; in short we need to have laid upon our souls the spell of that higher, nobler wonder to which I have alluded. Why, in these days of the Roman persecutions, were there some men and women brave enough to do without the mark of the beast, thoughtful enough to pierce through the wonder of the beast and see his poor reality, free enough and strong enough to break loose from the

beast and defy him, even though he crushed and mangled them for their defiance? You might put it in this way—that they felt upon their souls the spell of a higher wonder. When you once have seen the perfect Beauty, then size and power and glitter recede somewhat and take their proper place in the proportion of things. You remember the great prophetic word “ *His name shall be called Wonderful.* ” I am not surprised that men applied that word to Christ instinctively: it described Him as they found Him to be: the old hope and the new experience fitted into one another with divine perfection. The common people found Him wonderful: they were astonished at His doctrine, for His word was with power. The disciples found Him wonderful: what manner of man is this, they were forced to cry, that even the winds and the sea obey Him? Even the outsiders found Him wonderful—cold officials in the livery of their class, who were accustomed to take men and things as they came; “ Never man spake like this man,” they said when they were sent to arrest him. St. Paul found Him wonderful: “ to know the love of Christ,” he says, “ which passeth knowledge ”; you see! he has pursued his reason to the peak and stands there panting, allured yet baffled, and full of adoration and surprise. And this writer found Him wonderful:

the power and wonder and glory of the beast are displayed in many a glowing phrase, in many a majestic outline and rich touch of colour—his power, his pomp, his merchandise, his chariots, his slaves. But who can doubt that as this seer draws aside at God's bidding the curtain of the unseen, and sees and shows the Lamb in the midst of the throne, he sees the greatest of all wonders and the most glorious of all joys?—then and only then he makes haste and falls down and worships. And all through history His saints have found that His name is wonderful: I will let Thomas à Kempis speak for the whole shining multitude, when he cries "Lord Christ, there is none like unto Thee among all the wonders of heaven and earth." And it is true: His name is Wonderful; and there is no wonder in past or present, in heaven or earth, like the wonder of His love. Let that spell steal upon your heart to win it, attract it, subdue it! If you are to feel it, your conscience must be awake—conscience with its power of discerning moral reality, its power of distinguishing between the things that are really great, and those that are great only in outward show. And if you are to keep feeling it, you must learn to pray: even the loftiest truths may become commonplace through sheer familiarity: prayer helps to keep them fresh and

powerful, so that the romance of the Divine Grace does not fade before our eyes. So let us remain close to the great themes, the themes that are essentially wonderful, the themes that overshadow us with their might and majesty and are not soon exhausted—the Incarnation, the Cross, the inward and spiritual realities, the glory of the eternal things. Above all let us keep close to God's wonderful Christ, who is the centre and sum of them all. And we shall be delivered from the spell of the world in so far as that may be evil or hurtful, because the awe and rejoicing of that loftier wonder rests upon our souls continually.

“Love *so amazing*, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

XV

THE HOMING INSTINCT

“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”—ISA. lx. 8.

THIS is one of the loveliest expressions in the Bible of what may be named the homing instinct of the human soul. I wish to speak not of birds but of men; yet it may be good to pause for a moment at the beginning and watch the birds, as this prophet must have watched them ere he wrote this verse. There is nothing more beautiful in the realm of animal life than the instinct which draws a bird to its nest. They knew of it, and watched it, and even used it, in the earliest ages of which history gives us any trace. “Noah sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; then he put forth his hand and took her, and

pulled her in unto him into the ark." And who, imagining to himself that waste of waters, and the bird's eager quest for rest and shelter, will not see the beauty and the pathos of that homeward flight? In one species of birds the homing instinct has been trained and developed until it has become wonderful as well as beautiful ; the achievements of the homing pigeon are a kind of miracle which people can admire and utilize but can scarcely understand. Long before the time of Christ, this bird's powers were known in Egypt and other lands. The Romans used pigeons to bring them news of the Olympic games. In the twelfth Christian century the city of Baghdad had a pigeon post-office, by which communication was kept up with the chief cities of Syria. In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century fortunes were made on the London Stock Exchange because some business men got pigeon messages from Boulogne, which anticipated by several hours the ordinary Paris mail. But the homing instinct of a bird is at its loveliest when it is not developed for any sporting or commercial purpose, when it is free and unfettered, and untrained save by Mother Nature herself. Men have watched it in all ages, and have found in it parables full of meaning—hints of what they themselves would like to be and to do if their wingless souls could but rise

to the height of their own desires. "And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest; I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

But now I follow the finger-post of my text, and turn from birds to men. This is prophecy: it was not long before history came to be a commentary upon it. The prophetic hope, taught of God, was that the pride and joy of Israel should be restored—should be more than restored, should be extended until the whole world should see her light and pay tribute to her greatness. It was an astonishing hope, considering the desolation of the time in which it first began to burn and shine, the time of the great exile, when Israel was like the plaything of mightier nations and the focus of the judgments of God, stripped and crushed and tossed to and fro. But though it was a daring hope, let the marvellous eloquence of this chapter remind us how brightly it was kindled, and how magnificently it illumined the future. By and by history was made that turned the prophecy from a dream into a reality. There came the Jewish dispersion; the sons and daughters of Israel were scattered by the hundred thousand across the known world. It was exile in a sense, but it was not the old compulsory exile, brought about by military defeat; it was voluntary

exile, entered into for many cogent and alluring reasons. Some Jews sought military and political employment. Some sought lands more fertile and more easily productive than their own. Some sought a life more free and varied than the somewhat stern temper of Judea allowed. Most were tempted by the opportunities of commerce which the world was now opening up, combined with the facilities and rights which the Greeks were prepared to bestow upon immigrant Jews. So, for one reason or another, they scattered and settled across the world. And Jerusalem's world-wide empire began. There is nothing more amazing in history. Wherever her sons and daughters went, they kept their loyalty to their Mother City and her Temple, the centre of their faith and worship. When they prayed, they turned their faces towards Jerusalem. When they worshipped, they remembered the sacrifices which were offered for the whole nation within her Temple courts. When they came into contact with the ugly realities of heathenism, the contact but flung them back with a more passionate love and pride upon their own purer faith. They sent their annual half-shekel to the Temple treasury. There were elaborate organizations for collecting and forwarding this ; and when they could they made their pilgrimages to see Jerusalem with their own eyes,

that their feet might stand within her gates. So the ships of Tarshish in very truth brought her sons from far, and their silver and their gold with them. Grant if you like that there are yet deeper and broader meanings in these words—meanings that only the Church and Kingdom of Christ can perfectly fulfil; here was at all events their first fulfilment and commentary. Like doves to their windows, the sons and daughters of Jerusalem across all the broad world came to her; when they could not come themselves, they sent their winged desires and prayers. The homing instinct of the human heart has never expressed itself more passionately or more persistently.

Now that same homing instinct abides, winged and powerful, in the souls of men, and of course it takes different forms and shows itself on different levels. Sometimes it takes a *patriotic* form: it is love for a land; the old country is the home country; and the ships of Tarshish, transformed out of all recognition into the liners that plough the ocean highway, still bring her sons and daughters from afar. Sometimes it takes a *domestic* form; it is love for one's own house and home. Some people feel it very strongly at the end of a holiday or any long spell of absence; they will tell you that the best part of going away is just

the opportunity of coming back. Go to any of our great termini at the end of August or beginning of September : who are these that fly as a cloud ? They are people who have been on holiday in lodgings, boarding-houses, hotels, and they are not sorry to come home. And then the same instinct can also take a *religious* form, and that brings me back to my text. Who are these that fly as the doves to their windows ? They are the souls, not of Israel alone, but of every age, of every creed, who have found or who are trying to find their home in God ; who have said with Augustine : “ Thou hast made us for Thyself, and we are restless till we find our rest in Thee ” ; who have said with the son in the parable : “ I will arise and go to my Father.”

How is the instinct awakened ? In many different ways. Sometimes it is the response to *vision and revelation*. That is the conception of this great passage : “ The Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.” Then the homing instinct shall by that vision be awakened, and even “ the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Over and over again it has been so. Men have seen first, and seeing have desired, and their souls have been as birds upon the wing until they found

rest in the arms of God. The Wise Men saw the star and came to worship. The Ethiopian Eunuch saw in the pages of the prophet a strange, mysterious figure who drew him though he could not understand, and he groped about for a guide. Brother Lawrence saw the glory of God in the power that could clothe a leafless winter tree with the beauty of the springtime, and henceforward he was all desire to know this God and to serve Him and to live with Him. How often men have been reading this book, the Bible, with eyes that saw no day-spring and hearts that tasted no sweetness! And on a sudden the splendour has broken, and some word has given wings to their souls, bringing them to the Father's feet. It were easy to multiply instances until all history should seem alive with the whirr of wings, the movement of souls, seeking the face of God because they had seen some gleam of His glory. Sometimes again the instinct is awakened rather from the other side, through the bitter lessons of *pain and need*. They say that the eider-duck will suffer his nest upon the rocks of the Norwegian fjord to be robbed once and will not depart; he plucks the down from his own breast and lines it again. A second time the nest may be robbed, and still he stays, stripping his own breast once more. But if his treasure for the third time be taken from him,

he will stay no longer ; he spreads his wings and flies southwards to lands of the sun. That is how some souls have been taught to wing their flight towards God—not by joy, but by sorrow ; not by vision, but by necessity ; not by exhilaration, but by desperation. “ How many hired servants of my Father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! ” He sought the home he had not sought before, because he was hungry and miserable and ready to die. There have been many like him. “ Before I was afflicted,” said the Psalmist, “ I went astray, but now I keep Thy precepts.” “ Lord, remember me,” said the Malefactor, out of his agony, his faith nerved by its own need to flutter across the space between Christ’s Cross and his own. And as one adds instance to instance, once more history is busy with movement and astir with many wings, as one sees multitudes driven home towards God, driven like doves to their windows before the storm.

But when this homing instinct in its highest form is really quickened, whether it be directly by the grace of vision, or indirectly by the discipline of pain and need, who can analyse all its contents ? Some of the deepest facts of our being are here—here focussed and here expressed. The faith of our fathers is here—the instincts and the

aspirations that made them the men they were—come to life again in us their children. The lessons learned in our own childhood are here—revived and confirmed by experiences which childhood could not understand. The essential constitution of our own souls is here—made in the likeness of God, drawing towards Him by spiritual gravitation, tending to Him as doves to their nest or as waters to the sea. The memory, perhaps, of some who are gone pours its influence into this same instinct—those who lived with us in God and for God, and who, when they went away, bade us meet them at God's right hand. Mr. Canton has a weird little poem in which he tells how, in solitary rooms, when dusk is falling, he can hear the comrades of his boyhood calling, "Home ! home ! home !" as they used to call it from plain and wood and river when the day's racing and chasing were done. He hears it again from the ancient years, the signal cry of scattered comrades.

" I pause and listen while the dusk is falling ;
 My heart leaps back through all the long estrangement
 Of changing faith, lost hopes, paths disenchantèd ;
 And tears drop as I hear the voices calling Home ! "

So some of us, from amidst the mirk and mire to which our lives are all too ready to descend, hear the call and the summons of some lofty souls,

that, like doves to their windows, have gone home to God. And we know that we are untrue to our best selves and to our highest opportunities if we also do not set our faces towards the things unseen and eternal.

The important thing is this, that whensoever and howsoever this homing instinct arises in our hearts, we must not waste or neglect it. We must use it. We must obey it. We must find in it the impetus that shall carry us to our true home and resting-place. If it does nothing else, let it bring you to His house. Not seldom have men found His temple to be a half-way house—more than a half-way house—to Himself. And let it teach you to pray : as easily and as naturally as a bird's wings tempt it to fly, so easily and so naturally should that hunger within you teach you to pray ; you will reach your resting-place that way more quickly than by any other. And let it above all lead you to Christ, who has come from God to show us the homeward track, who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When you have seen Him and trusted Him and followed Him, you shall not grope in the dark or lose your path ; you can say with Paracelsus—

“ I see my way as birds their trackless way.
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive.
He guides me and the bird ! ”

And when the journey is ended, then least of all will He leave you to wander or to fail. There is a mediæval legend, which tells how a ship laden with pilgrims for Jersuaem went down in a great tempest. Only a few survived, but those who did escape beheld a strange sign upon the sea. Out of the chaos where the ship went down they saw a great company of white doves, in twos and threes and fives and tens ; and these, having come together as a cloud, flew up straight to heaven. And those who saw rejoiced, for they took it as a token that those who had failed to reach the earthly Jerusalem had found a straight path to Heavenly Zion. Now here is true history. There are some who to our earthly sight go down in the tempest. Some day we shall all be overwhelmed. Yet those who make their pilgrimage in God, and unto God, journey better and farther than the world can see. Why should not that last long flight be eager and glad ? Like the doves to their windows, they have gone home. The Lord is their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning are ended.

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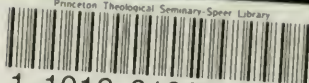
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